



THINKING *through* TRANSITION

Liberal Democracy, Authoritarian Pasts, and Intellectual History in East Central Europe After 1989

 **CEU PRESS**

Edited by
Michal Kopeček
and Piotr Wciślik

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Intellectual History in East Central Europe
After 1989

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Michal Kopeček and Piotr Wciślik



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Introduction

Towards an Intellectual History of Post-Socialism^{*}

MICHAL KOPEČEK AND PIOTR WCIŚLIK

It is not easy for historians to apply their methods to a period that does not yet have a clear end. A historical threshold, usually immediately recognized as such, detaches the “historical” from our lives today, creates badly needed distance for the process of historicization and, last but not least, gives an era a name. In our case, it is not the namelessness of the period after 1989, but rather the proliferation of names that bears witness to the unfinished and open nature of the epoch after the fall of state socialism in Central and Eastern Europe. We do not know yet what will become the ultimate historical horizon, although some trends seem quite persistent. The interwar period could be named “interwar” only after the outset of the Second World War. In the same manner we might expect that, taking a pessimistic view, there will be a historical turning point giving our era the name of “inter-authoritarian period” or “democratic intermezzo,” or, taking an optimistic view, the period of democracy-building and overall Europeanization at least in part of the region.

So far the most frequent names include “democratic transition” or “transformation period,” the era of post-communism or post-socialism, the period of neoliberal hegemony and capitalism-building, or post-communist post-democracy, post-Soviet post-colonialism and so on. Despite the intention to speak primarily about the present, each of the names, in its basic semantic structure, is still tied to the past, to what has been before, as the emblematic “post” insinuates. The only exceptions are “transition” and “transformation:” concepts oriented towards the wished-for democratic future. Symptomatically, these concepts are increasingly being abandoned, becoming a designation—with its strong normative connotations—of only one part of the epoch, vaguely speaking of the more optimistic, liberal oriented 1990s; the time of market and democracy building and of the imagined “return to Europe.”

^{*} For critical reading of the early drafts of this texts and valuable comments the authors’ thanks go to Kristina Andělová, Pavel Kolář, Sabine Rutar, and Balázs Trencsényi.

Each of these terms is infused with a specific analytical perspective together with political and normative biases, as we will show below. An intellectual history of political thought offers, we believe, suitable tools for overcoming some of the limitations and helping to fill the gaps in current scholarship. It also has the potential to incite cross-disciplinary dialogue, thanks to its sensitivity to local and regional contexts as well as the *longue durée* dynamics of political ideas themselves, their genealogies, transfers and creative adaptations.

Writing an intellectual history of the period in question—let us call it post-socialism for the time being—involves two major operations that we endeavor to pursue in this introduction. First, a critical reading of the hitherto scholarly literature specifically adapted for the purposes of intellectual history and historical argument in general. Second, a delineation of our own field of research in connection to the discipline's logic and tools applied in research about earlier periods. The latter requires among others imagining how a canon of intellectual history would look like in the region as a whole and its respective countries at some point in the future. Such a body of works does not yet exist, as it is still in a formative state. The field also needs a beginning and an end for such a canon of political and social thought to be possible.

In order to understand the added value of an intellectual history of post-socialism, we briefly turn first to the prevailing “transition and post-socialism research” and the knowledge it produced. Rather than providing a systematic overview here, we offer a consideration of this research from the point of view of a possible future intellectual history of that period. This means that we will focus particularly on those areas and themes of scholarly inquiry, which are either reflected in or impose themselves on the vocabularies and topoi of political debate in the region. Next, we turn to our own intellectual history perspective: its conceptual foundations, its historical trajectory in the region and what could be expected from its contribution. Finally, in order to exemplify its potential, we offer an insight into the main arguments of the individual chapters of this volume.

Thinking About Transition: The Rise and Withering Away of Transition Studies

The post-communist transition to democracy and capitalism in East Central Europe appears, at first glance, a thoroughly researched topic. A robust social scientific research developed over the last two decades within

the framework of “transition studies,” which was broadly conceived and carried out above all by the economic and political sciences, but also jurisprudence and sociology. As a result, a rich, complex, ideologically, semantically and conceptually “thick” research field came into being and must be taken into account by every aspiring historian of the post-socialist period. Such historians—and intellectual historians in particular—must study this vast amount of literature with regard to actors, problems and issues, without unwittingly adopting its terminology.

Sensitivity to the language of historical analysis requires taking distance from transitological analytical models, which despite their expert, if not technocratic, rhetoric, were often used as expedient tools of political intervention. However, it also demands a reflexive approach to the available critical perspectives. As we shall see throughout the period in question, the interpretation of the transitional 1990s has been a key point of contention and differentiation in the political arenas of the region. This fact, on the one hand, creates a bulk of critical reading (both left and right-wing) of the “transition years” that is useful to a historian in creating a critical distance. On the other hand, it also adds to the challenge of avoiding the trap of politicized language of current political conflict. Obviously, the critical potential of current political debates has been inscribed in the frame of political projects and identity-building but rarely has it aspired to historicize the recent past.

The subject of democratic transition was of enormous importance not only to the societies concerned, but also for the social sciences that took an active part in it. Understandably, the need to look for ways and means of leading society through the complex and many-layered processes of transformation from one social and political order to another created a significant demand for fast and applicable knowledge. Initially, political science was arguably best prepared for the task. First, the postwar political science was re-founded on the basis of sociology as an attempt to find a broad answer to the question of how democracy and democratic political orders work. Hence the basic questions of the “transition period” were inscribed in the very fabric of this discipline’s identity. Second, the first major empirical research field of political science was the postwar European democracies with one of the major themes being the problem of the democratization of post-authoritarian societies, epitomized by authors such as S. M. Lipset, G. Sartori, R. Dahrendorf, G. Almond, S. Verba, J. Linz, A. Stepan, D. Rustow or P. Schmitter. Well before 1989, therefore, most of the major lines of inquiry became available and at hand for testing against the new but familiar setting. A great advantage, in comparison to

other social sciences, was also political science's professed and practiced comparative approach that provided a broad, understandable and seemingly neutral framework for monitoring the political changes in the vast region of post-communist Eastern Europe from the outside.

In particular, political science gave birth to the powerful and symptomatic metaphor of Samuel Huntington's so-called third wave of democratization, which drew a historical arch from the first wave of the Anglo-Saxon democracies in the nineteenth century, through the second wave following the Second World War of post-totalitarian or post-authoritarian societies such as Germany, Japan and Italy to the third wave beginning in southern Europe in the 1970s and continued by post-communist Eastern Europe (also including regions like South Africa) after 1989. The post-communist stream of the third wave was the most complex, comprehensive and uncertain. The fact that political democratization and mass democracy preceded or was simultaneous to the creation of market economic structures and exposure to Western lifestyle and societal values was unprecedented in modern history. In many cases, changes also occurred in the composition of society or nation-state. This led some authors to speak rather about the "fourth wave of democratization" based on the complexity and specificity of the post-communist societies in contrast to the post-authoritarian ones.¹

Understandably, transition studies became a real academic industry in both East and West. An internal reason for the robust growth of transitional research was that it provided the possibility of re-specializing in a booming international academic market for many former Sovietologists and area studies experts, whose object of research had suddenly collapsed. It also became the most prominent, powerful and well-funded social-scientific research in post-socialist countries. The new royal discipline was particularly successful in countries such as Hungary or Poland, where political science as a discipline had existed before 1989. The fact that many of its practitioners studied in the West, participated in international research, and thus acquired the methodological know-how as well as necessary networking capacities, made political scientists from these countries the most successful group in international transition research after 1989.

Many research agendas of the early 1990s determined the major conceptual approaches and debates in "transition studies," such as the relationship between the market and democracy, the economic preconditions

¹ A. Ágh, "Globalization and Central-East European Democratization: The Fourth Wave," in *Transformative Paths in Central and Eastern Europe*, ed. R. Markowski and E. Wnuk-Lipiński (Warsaw: PAN, 2001), 93–110.

for democratic development and the ways and means of restructuring at the same time both the economic and political system. Another complex problem following the negotiated and legalist revolutions of 1989 became the question of the relationship between law and democracy involving not only the matters of early constitution-making and constitutional systems, but more generally the tension between the positivist legalism and democratic legitimacy of the new regimes. Closely related to the legal disciplines, the research on so-called transitional justice—not least due to concomitant processes of dealing with the authoritarian past in South Africa and elsewhere in the world—developed into a self-standing discipline during the first decade after European communism collapsed. The comparative perspective applied in most of this kind of international as well as domestic research in East Central Europe provided a clear frame of measurement of “transition,” yet it often worked at the expense of understanding local socio-cultural determinations of concrete political processes.

Due to the ethnic conflicts and successor wars in the post-Yugoslav and post-Soviet areas, the origins and escalation of ethnic conflict and war became another prominent field of study. The transitological research from many of these areas therefore had a slower development and later took a clear turn toward nation-building and national state-building questions rather than solely market and democratic transformation. Yet an important part of the whole transition research package was, from the very beginning, the study of political and national populism. Before the war on terrorism came into the center of the Western political focus, populism was considered the biggest threat to the transition process, having inherited some of the Cold War rhetoric. Nationalism and populism research, unlike other strains of transition studies, usually paid more attention to the historical genealogy and development of local political ideologies and major currents of thought.²

At the end of the 1990s, increased criticism of the “transition paradigm” appeared in political science lambasting the tendency in most transition studies literature to unreflectingly use “transitional language.”³ It

² J. Held, ed., *Populism in Eastern Europe: Racism, Nationalism, and Society* (Boulder: East European Monographs, 1996); P. Kopecky and C. Mudde, eds, *Uncivil society?: Contentious Politics in Post-communist Europe* (London: Routledge, 2002); see also the special section “Is East-Central Europe Backsliding?,” *Journal of Democracy* 18, 4 (October 2007): 17–25.

³ V. Bunce, “Should Transitologists Be Grounded?,” *Slavic Review* 54,1 (Spring 1995): 111–127; T. Carothers, “The End of the Transition Paradigm,” *Journal of Democracy* 13, 1 (2002): 5–21.

pointed to the bias in both democratization activism as well as the expert literature using as their point of departure the assumption that the countries departing from authoritarian order are somehow automatically working towards democratic regimes. After a decade of transition processes it started to be clear that “consolidated liberal democracy” is not an obvious outcome of the transition. Instead a variety of what has been termed “il-liberal” or “directed democracies” or straight authoritarian, in any case non-democratic, regimes appeared in post-communist Eastern Europe.

In general at the turn of the century, a very strong normative charge at the expense of analytical potential was exposed in the “transitological narratives” that often provided not a description of what was but rather what ought to be. The substantial normative bias of transitional knowledge—wished for understandably by political practitioners in the region—was further strengthened by the EU accession process and the so-called Euro-Atlantic integration of the “more consolidated” post-socialist democratic countries, underpinned by clearly stated rules and a normative framework. Besides, abstract approach to theory building has also been widely criticized. Based on generally accessible data but void of in-depth culturally informed knowledge and analyses, this “theory-building in an empirical wasteland” and its high generalizing aspirations have been called into question, albeit sporadically. As some critics argued, the history of post-socialist democratic transition, instead of basing itself on extensive empirical and area-specialist research, was primarily theoretical and to a large extent overlapped with the history of the interpretations of the transition.⁴

As an alternative to the prevailing transitological paradigm there were different types of East European transformation narratives that viewed the development from a broad, regional, longer-term perspective. Exemplary in this regard was the critical socio-economic history of the region providing a relatively influential narrative and accommodating the post-socialist transition into a longer-term narrative of regional specificity.⁵ The histori-

⁴ M. Bernhard, “Institutional Choice after Communism. A Critique of Theory-Building in an Empirical Wasteland,” *East European Politics and Societies* 14, 2 (2000): 316–347; J. P. Arnason, “Designs and destinies: making sense of post-communism,” *Thesis Eleven* 63 (2000): 89–97.

⁵ I. Berend, *Central and Eastern Europe, 1944–1993: Detour from the Periphery to the Periphery* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996); I. Berend, “The ‘Crisis Zone’ Revisited: Central and Eastern Europe in the 1990s,” *East European Politics and Societies* 15 (2001): 250–268; T. Inglot, *Welfare states in East Central Europe, 1919–2004* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008); J. Borocz, “Dual Dependency and

cal narrative of the repeated reformist or “transition” failures of the modernizing efforts to overcome the relative backwardness of the region and catch up with the West designed *sui generis* “transition studies” well before the actual post-socialist transition really started. This view actually had much appeal in circles of the reformist communist intelligentsia under the late socialist regimes and was more historical and contextual than the later transition studies. Yet partly due to its Marxist background and its strong economic and structuralist focus, it also reduced intellectual and conceptual history to a kind of mirror of the “real” developments.

In sum, despite the variety and quantity of published works on transitional democracy, very little attention was devoted to the peculiarities of the social, cultural and intellectual context of the individual polities. This was somewhat paradoxical, for on the eve of the new democratic period there was a significant interest in local political thought and a consensus around the notion that ideas mattered.⁶ The dissident politics, their concept of (self-organizing) civil society, anti-politics, and democracy based on human rights and civic activism aroused rather high expectations in terms of their early implementation in the post-socialist period; expectations that were soon disappointed.⁷ Along with the disillusion of the “unfulfilled” promises of “dissident legacy” and the supposedly low innovative potential of the 1989 revolutions, the flurry of institution-building during the early transition period resulted in a loss of interest in what the local political players and intellectuals thought and what kind of ideas informed the local political discourses. To be fair, the political players themselves were more than eager to do politics unburdened with intellectual pretensions and have their ideas delivered to them by “experts.”

Led by what might be called a “comparatist default setting,” the political science literature treated political parties and movements as the smallest possible unit of their analysis, only very rarely inquiring about their internal ideological divisions and the complex development of their internal political identities. Similarly, the idiosyncrasies of the political ideologies, their conceptual frameworks, historical dimensions, and reinvented

Property Vacuum: Social Change on the State Socialist Semiperiphery,” *Theory and Society* 21, 1 (February 1992): 77–104.

⁶ Cf. Tismaneanu, *Reinventing Politics. Eastern Europe from Stalin to Havel* (New York: Free Press, 1992); J. Isaac, “The Meanings of 1989,” *Social Research* 63, 2 (Summer 1996): 291–344; B. Falk, *Dilemmas of Dissidence in East Central Europe: Citizen Intellectuals and Philosopher Kings* (Budapest–New York: CEU Press, 2003).

⁷ See John Keane’s symptomatically disillusioned biography of Václav Havel. J. Keane, *Václav Havel. A Political Tragedy in Six Acts* (London: Basic Books, 2000).

traditions hardly found a place in the transitional research. Mostly a direct and one-directional adoptive process from West to the East was assumed. With all the important insights and conclusions that comparative political science has produced in the transition research, this “imitation theory” remains, at its best, a view of the region from outside. In contrast, the future historiography of political thought in this period must endeavor to do two things: first, to turn to the internal developments of political discourse and ideology and also the attached local cultural references, traditions and contexts. Second, and seemingly paradoxically, it must retain a comparative, transnational orientation. The latter is inevitable for any respectable intellectual history endeavor, since it provides for a necessary distance from local stereotypes, ingrained identities, and teleological political-historical narratives.

Thinking Critically About Transition: Post-communism and Post-socialism studies

Yet a critical if not a dissenting view on democratic transition existed in the social and anthropological sciences from the early 1990s. To a great extent, it was the result of a different research focus and thus also a different perspective on what transition might mean and bring to respective societies. While the political science approach was somewhat teleological, sociologists focusing on collective social actors (groups, milieus, or classes) were by definition more critical to the transition policies and ongoing social processes. With the first statistics starting to show the steep increase in unemployment and inflation in the region, sociology drew attention to the fact that even “democratic transition” has its winners and losers. The social impacts of transformation and the concomitant change in social structure became the major focus of early transition sociology. It did not provide merely detached sociological analysis but often reconsidered the transition’s fundamental assumptions and their adaptations in policy processes.⁸

⁸ See representative volumes such as P. Machonin, M. Sojka, and L. Mlčoch, eds., *Economic and social changes in Czech society after 1989: an Alternative View* (Prague: Karolinum, 2000); I. Krzemiński, ed., *Wielka Transformacja: zmiany ustroju w Polsce po 1989* (Warsaw: Łośgraf, 2011); See also C. G.A. Bryant and E. Mokrzycki, eds., *The New Great Transformation?: Change and Continuity in East-Central Europe* (London–New York: Routledge, 1994).

Similarly the perspective of cultural and social anthropology was almost inevitably critical of the “transitological research” and its paradigm. Anthropological research, working with qualitative data from the field and focusing on everyday life—for example, local values and worldviews, interactions between the global and the local, and so on—is bound to act as a corrective to the predominating grand narratives, statistical generalizations, and abstract models abundant in transition studies. Anthropologists were by default more critical of the transfer-policies that tried to implant Western models (such as capitalist market economy) into social settings without paying attention to local peculiarities and the inevitable continuities of social and cultural life underlying even the most fundamental social-historical turning points. For example, focusing on the fundamental transformation of rural life as a consequence of privatization at the beginning of the 1990s, anthropologists provided a highly critical view towards the nascent underlying “liberal consensus” about the necessity of privatization in the agrarian sector after socialism. A similarly distanced view towards the transition paradigm came from anthropological urban studies, such as ethnographic research of factory workers, their management, and social practices. This research included the impact and adaptations of the late capitalist marketization and consumerism in the everyday reality of the transforming societies, or the role of family ties and friendship networks in the re-creation of the old and new elites.⁹

The critical sociological, anthropological but also political economy research of the transition process provided the future intellectual history of post-socialism an important insight in that it tried to capture, describe, and analyze crucial contemporary social and cultural phenomena within the larger historical development. A good example is the so-called path-dependency analysis, an approach adapted from evolutionary economics and microeconomic analysis of business companies to social-political development. This sociological research questioned how certain socio-cultural configurations from the past predetermined decision-making and its implementation in the present time. In other words, it looked at what was specifically post-communist or post-socialist in East Europe’s transformation after 1989 and analyzed the permanency of certain political, economic, and mental structures in local societies.¹⁰ Close to this field of

⁹ See the representative volume C. M. Hann, ed., *Postsocialism: ideals, ideologies, and practices in Eurasia* (London–New York: Routledge, 2002).

¹⁰ See L. Bruszt and D. Stark, eds., *Postsocialist Pathways: Transforming Politics and Property in East Central Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998).

sociological research were endeavors to describe the building of capitalism without the capitalists or “capitalism with a comrade’s face.”¹¹ Sociological analyses of the foundations of post-socialist, capitalist economy based on the managerial (state) capitalism model inherited from state socialism or imported from the globalizing West resonated well with contemporary political debates on the *nomenklatura* privatization and economic shock therapies.

Another highly relevant area for the intellectual history of post-socialism is research on the role of elites—economic and political in particular—during transition, which became one of the favorite topics in the sociology of post-socialism.¹² Specific and politically engaged intellectual criticism of this genre was conducted in the fashion of Julien Benda and his concept of the “betrayal of clerks.” In this case, it was the betrayal of the former challengers or reformers of the state socialist regimes who, in their new circumstances as the governing majority, embraced the “neoliberal” agenda of the 1990s and thus “betrayed” their social role of internal critics of their societies. They paraded in new media attention and accepted well-paid positions as advisors to politicians instead of reflecting critically upon their activities.¹³

Last but not least, identity and memory politics became one of the defining factors of the post-socialist political cultures and the anthropological and sociological research in this area is of great significance for intellectual historians. It started with an anthropological interest in the role of the “past in the present,” in other words how memories, nostalgia, and accounts of the individual and collective past contributed to the reconstruction of collective identities in early post-socialism. Soon memory studies became a growing academic field, with sociologists,

¹¹ See R. Frydman, K. Murphy and A. Rapaczynski, eds., *Capitalism with a Comrade's Face: Studies in the postcommunist transition*, (Budapest–New York: CEU Press, 1998); M. Kostera, *Postmodernizm w zarządzaniu* (Warsaw: Polskie Wydawnictwo Ekonomiczne, 1996).

¹² I. Možný, *Proč tak snadno: Některé rodinné důvody sametové revoluce* (Prague: Sociologické nakl., 1991); G. Eyal, I. Szelenyi, and E. Townsley, *Making Capitalism without capitalists: Class Formation and Elite Struggles in Post-communist Central Europe* (London: Verso, 1998); E. Szalai, *The Hungarian Economic Elite After the Political Transition* (Budapest: Research Support Scheme, 1999).

¹³ See G. Eyal, *The Origins of Postcommunist Elites: From Prague Spring to the Breakup of Czechoslovakia* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2003); A. Bozóki, ed., *Intellectuals and Politics in Central Europe* (Budapest–New York: CEU Press, 1999); D. Ost, *The Defeat of Solidarity: Anger and Politics in Post-Communist Europe* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2005).

political scientists, historians, and scholars from other disciplines contributing to the topic. Often their research came close to an intellectual history of post-socialism *avant la lettre*, especially when conducted by researchers such as Paweł Śpiewak, an eminent intellectual historian himself.¹⁴

All in all, the critical readings of post-socialism provided by sociologists and anthropologists have tackled various topics relevant for intellectual historians. They analyzed intelligentsia adaptations, the formation of new-old elites, the changing of social structures, the social impacts of transition, the evolution of post-socialist mentalities, as well as local social and cultural practices. The attention to the socio-political role of collective memories and reinterpretations of the recent past has facilitated an understanding of the multilayered impact of, and adaptations and local responses to, the overwhelming transformation process. However, these research approaches usually did not show *how political ideas worked* in this environment and *how they originated, migrated, transformed and behaved* within the region of East Central Europe. This is a task for intellectual historians to pick up.

Deconstructing Transition: Against a “Neoliberal Hegemony”

In the last decade or so, a field of research of post-socialism appeared where ideas seemingly acquired a more prominent role. Above all in the domains of sociology, anthropology and political economy, a critique of neoliberalism took a central place among the approaches to the “transition.” It differed from the earlier critiques of the post-communist transition in several aspects.

First of all, most of the studies of post-communism shared with transitionology a monist historical imagination in which political modernity had a single goal, a capitalist, liberal democracy composed of the advanced post-industrial countries of the West, even if they differed in the degree of

¹⁴ Cf. T. Rosenberg, *The Haunted Land: Facing Europe's Ghosts after Communism* (New York: Vintage Books, 1995); F. Mayer, *Les Tchèques et leur communisme: Mémoire et identités politiques* (Paris: Éditions de l'École des hautes études en sciences sociales, 2004); I. Rév, *Retroactive Justice: Prehistory of Post-communism* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 2005); J. Mark, *The Unfinished Revolution. Making sense of the Communist Past in Central-Eastern Europe* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2010); P. Śpiewak, *Pamięć po komunizmie* (Gdańsk: Słowo/obraz terytoria, 2005).

optimism toward the prospects of arriving at this imaginary point. They also shared the assessment of socialism's failure, even though they disagreed on the extent to which the permanence of socialism's legacy (from degradation of the entrepreneurial spirit to informal networks of power) affects the development of new polities. While critics of neoliberalism do not actually espouse an exaggerated nostalgia towards once-existing people's democracies and planned economies, they do represent a pluralist approach in political economy, albeit with a strong preference for the Scandinavian model. The object of their critical inquiry has been not so much the coming of capitalist society, but an offensive against the current neoliberal ideology. The set of institutions and policies eponymous with the names of Ronald Reagan, Margaret Thatcher or Friedrich Hayek do not, in their view, amount to market economy as such. Rather, neoliberalism constituted a quite experimental (with respect to the postwar welfare state), particularly unjust (especially as opposed to the Scandinavian model) and arguably inefficient (especially when it comes to social capital) way of getting "from Marx to market," a virulent mutation, which in the post-communist transition was taken for granted as a natural order of things to which "there was no alternative."¹⁵

Secondly, a critique of neoliberalism introduced a new perspective on East Central Europe's position in the global order. For both transitologists and critics of post-communism, the ultimate result of socialism was a growing development gap compared to the region's West-European neighbors (whether of transitory or permanent nature). The reversal of this process and catching up with the West was seen as a technical matter, which could be enhanced or obstructed by politics. The critics of neoliberalism, in contrast, have proposed unveiling the global power relations implied in the very notion of transition. For instance, they believed the capitalist restructuring of the region to be a laboratory of the future, in which the core countries of globalism test their policies at the periphery before introducing them at home.¹⁶ Such readings—going against the grain of the Cold War polarities as well as the North-South divisions—have brought together the fiscal crisis of late socialism, the austerity re-

¹⁵ T. Kowalik, *www.polskatransformacja.pl* (Warsaw: Muza, 2009). See also Maciej Gdula's article in this volume.

¹⁶ P. Gowan, "Neo-Liberal Theory and Practice for Eastern Europe," *New Left Review* 213, 1, (September–October 1995), 3–60; N. Klein, *The Shock Doctrine: The Rise of Disaster Capitalism* (London: Penguin Books, 2007); D. Harvey, *A Brief History of Neoliberalism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005).

gimes introduced in Third World countries, and also the recent crises of late capitalism in the Western core.¹⁷ Similarly, they have observed commonalities in the resistance to neoliberalism: different instances of populism in the region on the one hand and new social movements on the other hand are both seen as expressions of global protest against the neoliberal consensus.¹⁸

Finally, this insight into the global order of power has been coupled with a critical interpretation of how post-socialism works on a micro level. Whereas previous approaches understood the process of getting out of the socialist rubble as efforts (successful or not) aimed at reducing the effects of the exposure to Sovietization and bringing back “normal” social relations, this approach finds nothing natural in the process of post-socialist restructuring. On the contrary, in a mixture of inspiration coming from Polányi and Foucault, critics of liberalism have taken to heart the idea that in order for there to be a capitalist economy, a capitalist society must be built first; critics would then observe how seemingly expert discourses converged into a disciplinary apparatus aimed at producing post-socialist subjects.¹⁹

So far, the reading of post-socialism as a triumph of neoliberalism has not yet become a mainstream research approach. It has been criticized from various points of view, for instance through observing the political economy of post-socialism, which is similarly critical to neoliberal or liberal biases in the economic and social transformation of what many authors see as a current form of “political capitalism.”²⁰ Yet basing its analysis less on ideas and political rhetoric and more on economic and political indicators, the research in question tentatively summarizes the result of the transformation period in Central and Eastern Europe after 1989 with the notion of a “variety of capitalisms” ranging from the continental European social corporatist model to a hybrid or uncoordinated capitalism, rather than victory of a particular liberal or neoliberal model.²¹

¹⁷ J. Bodnár, *Fin de Millénaire Budapest: Metamorphoses of Urban Life* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2001); Eyal, *Origins of Postcommunist Elites*.

¹⁸ D. Kalb and G. Halmai, eds., *Headlines of Nations, Subtexts of Class: Working Class Populism and the Return of the Repressed in Neoliberal Europe* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2011); Ost, *Defeat of Solidarity*.

¹⁹ E. C. Dunn, *Privatizing Poland: Baby food, Big Business, and the Remaking of the Polish Working Class* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2004).

²⁰ J. Staniszkis, *Postcommunism: The Emerging Enigma* (Warsaw: PAN-ISP, 1999).

²¹ D. Lane and M. Myant, *Varieties of Capitalism in Post-Communist Countries* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2007); D. Bohle and B. Greskovits, *Capitalist Diversity on Europe's Periphery* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2012).

In other words, while it shares the pluralist perspective of neoliberalism studies, it considerably blunts its critical edge.

Another critique of the neoliberalism-hegemony-thesis comes from a different angle that looks at the idea-centered way of analysis that its supporters employed. According to this view, there is little empirical evidence about the radical and ideologically driven neoliberal transformation, let alone the local acceptance and endorsement of alleged neoliberal prescriptions coming mainly from international economic institutions contributing to the “Washington consensus.” Hence both the supposed ideological coherence of the neoliberal doctrine in the 1990s and the local actors endorsing this doctrine and driving the neoliberal revolution onwards need first to be identified and analyzed in empirical studies if the neoliberal-hegemony-thesis is to prove its relevance.²²

All in all, critiques of neoliberalism are one of those cases in social science in which the virtues of an approach are at the same time its flaws. On the one hand the approach proved its usefulness in disenchanting the somewhat reified concepts and categories of analysis prevalent in the 1990s, especially when it comes to the East-West mosaic of relations and the still vivid Cold War conceptual polarities. Yet on the other hand, to the extent that this approach considers post-socialism and its protest movements as a part of the emerging global order, it loses sensitivity to the historical circumstances and empirical evidence, especially when building on a rather mechanical understanding of the neoliberal ideas in the region.²³

That brings us to a more general, concluding remark. On the one hand, in the critical approaches to the transition, the transfer and transnational diffusion of certain ideas and ideologies gets an increasingly prominent position, an important change from the older transitological research. On the other hand, those approaches often suffer paradoxically from the old malady of the history of ideas that treats ideas in a Platonic way as a sort of supra-terrestrial entity. They tend to focus on ideas on a global scale beyond their immediate social and cultural context and without taking into account their longer-term genealogies. The heart of inquiry, therefore, is the international flow of ideas, the assumed, but not tested, acceptance by

²² For an early criticism of this kind see V. I. Ganey, “The ‘Triumph of Neoliberalism’ Reconsidered: Critical Remarks on Ideas-Centered Analyses of Political and Economic Changed in Post-Communism,” *East European Politics and Societies* 19, 3 (2005): 343–378.

²³ There are exceptions, however, such as the approach sensitive to context and local ideas taken by Johanna Bockman in J. Bockman, *Markets in the Name of Socialism: The Left-Wing Origins of Neoliberalism* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 2011).

locals, and the more or less successful introduction of these ideas into practical politics. In this sense the intellectual history of post-socialism—apart from not being an established field of research in the first place—has been so far mostly concerned with the transnational level. It focuses on transfer and resistance in the realm of ideas, ideologies or political-cultural paradigms, while local origins, adaptations, and transformations remain a fairly unknown land outside of local academic and political contexts. No wonder that a great discrepancy, perhaps even misunderstanding, occurs between the international research and debate on post-socialism and its local political and scholarly counterparts.

Thinking in Transition: Intellectual History of Post-Socialism

The present book is the first attempt to venture into the intermediary territory of treating the development of post-socialist political thought in the region from the perspective of locally sensitive and simultaneously comparative intellectual history. Starting from the local and empirical research it endeavors to create an intermediary domain of research enabling an intra-regional or extra-regional comparison in the field of political and social thought in the post-1989 period. It does not in any way pretend to be a systematic account of the intellectual history of post-socialism. The aim is to test what intellectual history could bring to our understanding of the period in question and, by extension, also the present.

The volume was conceived during a workshop convened by a group of East Central European intellectual historians held in Prague in May 2011 under the auspices of the Institute for Contemporary History (Prague) and the Heinrich Böll Stiftung. Adopting the perspective of intellectual history but inviting multidisciplinary expertise, the workshop aimed at creating a space for specific reflection on the post-socialist “transition period” in East Central Europe and its historicization. The central goal of the event was to gather scholars from various social sciences and humanities disciplines working on some aspects of intellectual history in the broadly defined region of East Central Europe. In the later publishing process, the initial network was further expanded to include new authors, new topics, and new perspectives.

The incentive behind the Prague workshop came from a more general intellectual history research project entitled “Negotiating Modernity: History of Modern Political Thought in East-Central Europe.” Led by Hungarian scholar Balázs Trencsényi, the project was supported by the Euro-

pean Research Council and hosted by the Centre for Advanced Studies in Sofia.²⁴ The main goal of “Negotiating Modernity” is to provide a first comparative and synthetic history of political thought from the Enlightenment to the early twenty-first century. However, during the course of the research and the drafting of first chapters, it became clear that conceptualizing the intellectual history of the post-1989 period would be among the most challenging and difficult tasks that the project group faced. Hence, the Prague meeting, devoted solely to this time period, was meant as both an exploratory workshop gathering a critical potential from a broader pool of scholars working on some aspects of the problem and a self-standing initiative for the formation of a scholarly network within the field of intellectual history of post-socialism.

Seen from a long-term perspective, the intellectual history of post-socialism is in many ways a continuation of the “logic” of modern history of political and social thought in the region. For more than two and a half centuries, intellectual history’s development has been characterized by two major factors, namely the asymmetrical process of cultural transfer between West and East, and, second, the strong discontinuities caused by a number of abrupt political changes in Central and Eastern Europe in contrast to Western Europe.²⁵ Both of these phenomena show themselves with a new and emphatic clarity in the post-1989 period. The “transition era” was understood widely inside and, to a lesser extent, outside the region as a transfer of the allegedly well-tested liberal democratic and market-based economic model from the West to the East. Among others, this gave rise to the most influential interpretative patterns (portrayed above), such as “imitation theory” or the “import of neoliberal revolution.” At the same time, the new democracies after 1989 and their political cultures demonstrated strong, self-professed discontinuities with the old “totalitarian” order. This historical discontinuity, both confessed and constructed, has been represented in many ways within the framework of the politics of history and memory, which has determined the nature of the current political culture in the region.

Adopting the vantage point of intellectual history, the contributors to this volume intend to see ideas within the post-socialist period in a longer-term perspective. In contrast to most of the critical social scientific re-

²⁴ <http://negotiating.cas.bg/> Michal Kopeček is a member of the project.

²⁵ B. Trencsényi, “Conceptual History and Political Languages: On the Central-European Adaptation of the Contextualist-Conceptualist Methodologies of Intellectual History,” *Prague Perspectives* vol. 1: *The History of East Central Europe*, ed. P. Roubal and V. Veber: 142–163.

search on post-socialism, the chapters also demonstrate sensitivity to a regional dynamism beyond the immediate social sphere. Ideas have namely a different dynamism than social structures and everyday interactions, and thus in certain cases, different social stages and “transformation strategies” can experience a similar ideological configuration resulting from similar conceptual and ideological backgrounds. For example, the ubiquitous notion of “civil society” in various countries of East Central Europe after 1989 has been one of the numerous visible “legacies” of the anti-communist democratic opposition. Yet in every country the notion and public debates around it developed quite differently and had a diverse weight in creating the post-socialist contours of “the political.” In contrast to the neoliberalism-hegemony critiques, the individual studies in this volume (see for instance the first section on liberalism) approach the transfer and circulation of ideas from a bottom-up perspective, stressing the specificities of local cultural discourses and political configurations.

The current intellectual history is characterized by a variety of perspectives, themes, and methodological preferences depending on the country and the historical period being researched.²⁶ There are diachronic approaches, adopting a genealogical perspective in terms of a particular ideological stream, intellectual tradition, or “political language.” There are analyses focusing on the history of particular concepts following the trajectories, adaptations, and reformulations of certain concepts within their respective political discourses or individual political traditions. There are synchronic methods stressing less the genealogical and more the broader socio-cultural context of ideas (sociology of knowledge, collective biographies), as well as the semiotic and linguistic setting (the analysis of discourse). To that we must also add the comparative perspective, quite prominent in the intellectual history of East Central Europe in recent years, which endeavors to broaden the prevailing nationally or locally oriented intellectual historiographies to a more general level enabling comparison, mutual communication, and negotiation from a supranational or transnational point of view.²⁷ At any rate intellectual history

²⁶ See D. Castiglione and I. Hampsher-Monk, eds., *The History of Political Thought in National Context* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001).

²⁷ See the four-volume reader *Discourses of Collective Identity in Central and Southeast Europe, 1770–1945*, (Budapest–New York: CEU Press, 2006ff); B. Trencsényi, *The Politics of “National Character:” A Study in Interwar East European Thought* (London: Routledge, 2012); A. Dimou, *Entangled Paths Towards Modernity: Contextualizing Socialism and Nationalism in the Balkans* (Budapest–New York: CEU Press, 2009); D. Mishkova, ed., *“We, The People”—Politics of National Peculiarity in Southeast Europe*

research differs very much depending on the tradition of intellectual history in the respective countries (more traditional history of ideas, contextualist approach, history of concepts, history of discourses, etc.) and thus can also have various objects of inquiry.

There has been a not negligible tradition of intellectual history research especially in the early modern and modern periods in parts of the region such as Poland or Hungary.²⁸ However this research has exhibited rather little scholarly interest in contemporary history, both the post-war and the post-socialist. This is due to many reasons. The recent past was ideologically the most heavily loaded during state-socialist times, and resulted in a scarcity of scholars adventuring into the dangerous realm of twentieth century intellectual history. These scholars were mindful of the fate of colleagues whose audacity led to their marginalization or emigration (emblematic here is the fate of members of the “Warsaw School of History of Ideas” such as Leszek Kołakowski, Bronisław Baczko, Andrzej Walicki). Furthermore, after 1989 the ranks of intellectual historians became heavily depleted in response to a perceived demand to facilitate the transfer of new trends in the Western political philosophy resulting in a re-specialization of many promising authors. Western, particularly Anglo-American, contemporary political philosophy experienced remarkable success in East Central Europe—often at the expense of local intellectual history. Third, the process of post-socialist democracy-building did not ascribe much value to political ideas, a thesis which seems to be corroborated by the lack (with the exception of a few short-lived attempts in the early 1990s) of intellectual focal points such as think tanks or journals affiliated with the world of institutional politics that might have fostered attention to indigenous intellectual and political traditions. More generally, the explicitly ahistorical and normative turn in political science—whether imposed from the outside or self-imposed in the name of “transition”—undermined the status and potential of intellectual history that was developing in many Eastern European countries before 1989. Thus while intellectual history eventually became an important element in the study of earlier historical periods even after 1989, it lost its salience and authority in dealing with the present or the recent past.

(Budapest–New York: CEU Press, 2009); M. Falina and B. Trencsényi, eds., “Coping with Plurality: Nationalist and Multinational Frames of Mind in East Central European Political Thought, 1878–1940,” thematic issue of *East Central Europe* 39, 2–3 (2012).

²⁸ See R. Sitek, *Warszawska szkoła historii idei. Między historią a teraźniejszością* (Warsaw: Scholar, 2001); J. Takáts: *Modern magyar politikai eszmétörténet* (Budapest: Osiris, 2007).

Finally, there was another less political and more theoretical set of obstacles to studying post-socialism from an intellectual history perspective. As already mentioned, a temporal distance from the studied period is badly needed. As intellectual history is by definition a hermeneutic discipline, the lack of distance makes it harder to grasp the “logic” of current ideas within their development. In this vein, it is also difficult to define and demarcate the nascent canon of political texts and debates, and to tell apart the different configurations or political languages in open political discourse. The temporality of the history of ideas, in fact, does not parallel political history, which is event-driven. Instead it unveils its contours in a medium- or long-term historical period.

In addition, intellectual history of most recent times has to adapt to the specificities of contemporary history research. Post-socialism, or more generally the postwar period, has its own peculiar intellectual dynamics, which intellectual history needs to accommodate. The period after 1968 witnessed a general redefinition of “the political” and many feminist or environmental concerns were difficult to grasp for scholars skilled in classic political thought. Some of the unease results from the fact that a considerable part of interesting intellectual production originated within social movements, something difficult to research for historians used to dealing with printed volumes of collected works. In this case, the very presupposition of a “canon” already precludes some areas of important research.

Considering the limitations and deficiencies in this subject and scholarly field, the current volume represents a modest attempt to fill some of the apparent gaps. Since there are almost no self-standing education or research programs in intellectual history in the region and given that disciplinary boundaries are becoming increasingly fluid, the disciplinary spectrum of our authors exhibits a considerable diversity. Indeed few of them would identify themselves as intellectual historians. The Prague conference initiated none the less a promising cross-disciplinary dialogue. The volume thus presents some of the most interesting results of the first phase of this dialogue and cooperation. While lacking comprehensiveness, it has, we firmly believe, an exploratory value for the field of intellectual history of post-socialism and intellectual history of East Central Europe in general. For the sake of clarity and giving conscious preference to empirically-based and inductive research, the volume is organized along more or less conventional groupings of political traditions such as liberalism, conservatism, populism and leftist streams, all of which have played an important role in the region’s politics and political thought after 1989. The

only exception from this categorization is the last thematically defined section headed “politics of history.”

Many papers actually do not intend to map out the genealogy and current state of particular political traditions *per se* but focus on conceptual history or political debates that define a crucial field where political ideas directly influence political processes (for instance, constitutionalism). What is more, some of the authors call into question the implicit idea behind the division of individual political traditions or ideologies by analyzing ambiguities and contested issues. Therefore the themes around which chapters are clustered should be taken by the reader as a tentative cognitive instrument and incentive for discussion, rather than a strict categorization of political traditions. Last but not least, in a group of authors as diverse as ours, it is hardly possible to make a clear distinction between political-tradition clusters and thematic clusters, as the “politics of history” illustratively demonstrates. We believe that the thematic field of the “politics towards the past” was worth singling out due to its defining nature for the political cultures and thus also intellectual history of post-socialism.

Liberalism of Fear, Liberalism of Threat

Not by chance we open the volume with a section tackling the liberal political tradition. The four papers gathered here try to grasp the nature of the “moment of liberal dominance” in the first half of the 1990s. The nature of what lately has been called by Ivan Krastev a “liberal consensus” remains to be somewhat enigmatic despite the early and critical interest it aroused among eminent intellectual historians such as Jerzy Szacki.²⁹ Some of our authors, especially Ferenc Laczó and Milan Znoj, analyze the identity dilemmas and conceptual difficulties faced by early post-socialist liberals, as well as their efforts to define what liberalism in this epoch should be in the first place. Laczó, commenting on a selection of prominent liberal thinkers such as István Eörsi, János Kis, György Konrád, Miklós Szabó and Gáspár Miklós Tamás, portrays 1990s Hungarian liberal political thought as a progressive force in the early post-communist politics. He attempts to delineate the contours of the liberal political identity in this particular historical moment, when liberal principles and a liberal approach to politics amounted to the spirit of the moment shared by the

²⁹ J. Szacki, *Liberalism After Communism* (Budapest–New York: CEU Press, 1995).

majority of political actors. The author shows the great variety of liberal political concepts at that time and yet defines a common feature uniting all the thinkers: their criticism of right-wing nationalism and the revocations of Hungarian pre-communist political traditions from the interwar period. One of the general observations of his study concerns the ambiguity between the objectives and the rhetorical style of the liberal thinkers, who, on the one hand, strove to formulate the fundamentals of the liberal political consensus, while, on the other hand, employed a highly polemical style that was, by and large, counterproductive towards achieving that goal.

Piotr Wciślik follows a similar discursive and intellectual process in the Polish context. Yet his approach exhibits an explicit conceptual emphasis on the notion of “totalitarianism” that played a prominent role in the political philosophy and mobilization rhetoric of the former anti-communist democratic opposition. Describing the concept’s semantic shift across the 1989 divide and its peculiar temporality or “transitional kairos,” the author points to some important features of the pre-1989 conceptual dynamics of totalitarianism and analyzes how these features translated into the post-socialist public political discourse. Wciślik claims that it was the concept of totalitarianism that became the foundation of the peculiar form of post-dissident “liberalism of fear,” resembling Judith Shklar’s idea,³⁰ and shows how this contributed to the construction of the major post-totalitarian challenges to the newly emerging democratic order. Paradoxically, it was Solidarity—in 1989 still the major bulwark of civic and democratic resistance against post-totalitarian dictatorship—that soon became identified as one of the major threats to democracy.

The dilemmas for the post-dissident “liberal” elites were more or less the same throughout East Central Europe as Milan Znoj demonstrates using the example of Václav Havel, the symbolic figure of dissident “victory over communism.” Yet here we can simultaneously see how different the cultural-historical configuration could be. Unlike Hungary and Poland, the Czech post-socialist liberalism had an imagined positive and successful state-building example set by the Czechoslovak liberalism of the interwar period. Furthermore, in the context of the emerging political divisions, the main political enemy of Czech post-dissident liberals was not the post-communist ethno-nationalism but neoliberal conservatism, whose origins were both dissident and party-technocratic. Znoj looks at the nascent political struggle within the post-opposition spectrum with particular

³⁰ J. Shklar, “Liberalism of Fear” in *Political Liberalism: Variations on a Theme*, ed. Shaun Young (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2004), 147–167.

regard to the concept of “civil society” as elaborated by Havel. On the one hand, he evaluates its possible inspirations and also differences with respect to the Czech social liberal tradition reaching back to the political thought of Tomáš G. Masaryk. On the other hand he also takes into account broader implications of the originally dissident Chartist notion of “non-political politics” and its transformation into a peculiar form of “moral populism” as practiced by Havel.

Finally Paul Blokker’s study offers yet a different approach to the re-configuration of the original dissident “proto-liberal”³¹ political ideas and strategies through the lens of constitutionalism. His main question is how and why the legalistic form of liberal constitutionalism emerged in the region from 1989 onwards, and what kind of constitutional traditions were involved. In particular he focuses on the “liberal-legalist” strategy of the human rights opposition during late socialism, but also the strategic emphasis on legal continuity as a means of the negotiated and self-limiting revolutions of 1989. The preference for legalism and legal constitutionalism in the early post-socialist period, in his view, was understood as an antidote to the “ideological” conflict and thus also as an important means of preventing a return to totalitarianism or dictatorship. From a different vantage point he thus arrives at a conclusion similar to Wciślik’s in evaluating the post-dissident liberalism as a “liberalism of fear” derived from the preference for a negative form of constitutionalism and thus also a negative definition of liberty in a liberal democratic order. Blokker points out that even though negative constitutionalism was the post-1989 mainstream, it was not the only constitutional tradition available. He explores in particular “democratic constitutionalism” (with emphasis on self-government and radical or participatory democracy provisions) and “communitarian constitutionalism” (or even constitutional nationalism). Especially the latter, as we will see in the volume’s other studies, had far-reaching consequences after the “liberal consensus” and its underlying constitutional process was thoroughly questioned.

The Conservative and the Revolutionary

Moving on to the second section, which maps out post-socialist conservatism, we are not yet leaving the discussion of the post-dissident or post-opposition political camp. The three chapters, each from their own par-

³¹ Szacki, *Liberalism After Communism*, 73–117.

ticular perspective, test the hypothetical “counter-revolutionary” character of “conservatism after communism” in East Central Europe. Petr Roubal’s study focuses on a small but influential post-dissident conservative party, the Civic Democratic Alliance (*Občanská demokratická aliance*, ODA), and their radical “policies of history” tied to the neo-liberal economic transformation designs in Czechoslovakia and the Czech Republic. The coalition of neo-conservative intellectuals and neo-liberal economists within this group was based on what Roubal calls “anti-communism of the future,” a consensus that the best way to deal with the communist heritage would be to implement a set of neoliberal policies, as quickly and as radically as possible, that would forever prevent communism’s return. He describes the radical vision of the neo-conservative (counter) revolution in several principal areas. First, the Alliance pushed for the concept of discontinuity between communism and post-communism through a general “historical law” on the illegitimate nature of communist rule, which was accepted by the Czech parliament in 1993. Second, they argued for a “functional federation” of Czechs and Slovaks, which meant that the party not only refused to back down to contemporary Slovak political demands, but on the contrary proposed constitutional amendments limiting the influence of the two republics in federal decision-making. This radical standpoint was motivated less by national chauvinism than the idea of the “left-wing nature of nationalism,” understood by the neo-conservatives as an effort by the former communists to reverse the process of transformation. Third, the author looks at the role played by this predominantly intellectual political party in the process of privatization, which it saw as the method of making the most radical break with the communist past.

Another sort of “conservative counter-revolution”—this time oriented towards a fundamental change in value orientations and perceptions of Polish society rather than the immediate dilemmas following the 1989 democratic revolutions—is described by Rafał Matyja in his article elaborating the Polish case. He creates a broad narrative of recent Polish conservative political thought from the late 1970s to today. Modern Polish conservatism generally stands for an influential intellectual current that grew out of a religious and moral renewal during the 1980s and became an indispensable part of the Polish cultural-political discourse in the post-socialist period. Yet it failed to form the basis for a self-standing, long-term political movement. The peculiar conditions in Poland gave birth to a great variety of conservative sensitivities connected to various older political traditions as well as new ideological offerings. In general Matyja identifies two basic approaches in conservative political thought—the

cultural, emblemized by Jacek Bartyzel, and the political, represented by Aleksander Hall—that originated as early as the late 1970s. Both were relatively vague streams within the circle of the influential Movement of Young Poland (*Ruch Młodej Polski*, RMP) that in many ways predetermined the evolution of conservative intellectual history after 1989. Matyja borrows the title of William Blake’s famous collection of poems “Songs of Innocence and of Experience” to account for this interesting generational feature. Polish “conservatism after communism” was in fact an accomplishment of the youngest political generation before 1989, whose first significant political experiences occurred before the age of 30. The history of Polish conservatism after 1989 in Matyja’s narrative is a story of the maturing of that generation, many of whose members are now influential politicians and cultural figures.

The chapter authored by Zoltán Gábor Szűcs has a very different take. Similar to that of Paul Blokker and in fact elaborating on some of his assumptions, Szűcs’ main perspective is not that of a particular political tradition, but the constitutional process. He starts with a visible rupture in the Hungarian constitutional history after 1989 connected to the emergence of a two-thirds parliamentary majority of the Hungarian Right in 2010 and subsequent years. In Szűcs’s playful style of working with categories the meaning of “conservative” gets an interesting and sometimes subversive twist, as in the title of his study, which points to socialist and liberal consensus-politics (conservatively) respecting the legal and constitutional continuities with the late state-socialist regime. In contrast, he argues that the subsequent right-wing coalitions, which stress their emphasis on conservative values, are clearly professing a conflictual if not “conservative revolutionary” approach to constitution-making derived from transient power divisions and agonistic politics.

The analytical axis of this study is formed by questioning the similarities and differences between the “failed constitution-making enterprise” of the left-wing coalition in 1994–1998 and the quite recent enactment of the Basic Law of Hungary by right-wing parties in 2011–2012. The fundamental difference, according to Szűcs, is the Skinnerian “political vision”³² underlying both enterprises. The socialists and the liberals represented a consensualist vision of politics that in many ways was the heritage of the political culture of the Kádár-regime and the democratic transition. The right-wing coalition, on the contrary, stresses a conflictual vision

³² Q. Skinner, *Visions of Politics*, Vol. 1–3 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006).

of politics. Whereas failure of the former was a result of the weakening of the political culture of consensus, the success of the latter was a by-product of the qualified (two-thirds) majority of the right-wing parties in the Hungarian Parliament enhancing rather than mitigating the underlying conflict-driven political style.

Populisms Dead and Alive

While after 1989 it quickly became apparent that the resurrection of a communist threat was not to be feared, populism came to be regarded as the greatest obstacle to the consolidation of liberal democracy and a market economy. Populism gave a second life to the combative conceptual dichotomies inherited from the Cold War: individualism versus collectivism, liberal governance versus authoritarian leadership. It seemed endemic to East Central Europe, both because of the recent past and also the deeper layers of political culture.

From the perspective of more than two decades after 1989, populism still remains a significant category of analysis, as corroborated by the authors within the third section of our volume, as well as others. Many things have changed nevertheless. First of all, an exclusively regional perspective has clearly become too narrow. Contemporary populism is no longer regarded necessarily as either post-socialist or East Central European, but rather a general direction in which democratic politics has been going in many parts of the world, including those with developed democracies. This is why, second, populism's relation to democracy is now seen as being more complicated, both when it comes to the present and the past.

In an essay informed by the broader conceptual debate of the phenomenon, Camil Parvu proposes to interpret Romanian populism not as a pathological syndrome of the transition, but rather as a symptom inherent in the post-political condition. In times such as these, where it becomes increasingly difficult to take the healthy state of public affairs for granted (and whose degeneration is supposedly symbolized by populism), crises of political representation call for a response outside the procedural box. What the author calls "permanent populism" is not a feature of radical, but marginal actors within the Romanian political scene. Populist mobilizations often advocate slogans that bear an uncanny resemblance to, or in fact are the same as, the slogans of the transition's liberal partisans. The populists, just like the liberals, target the corruption of the political class

or incompetence and bureaucratic inefficiency within state bureaucracy. Populists might be radicals in that they incite a belief in a redemptive power of politics, but it is often a politics in the name of the utopia of a new technocracy and a new consensus, which, as Parvu concludes, ultimately testifies to a shallowness of their political commitments.

Populists, writes András Bozóki, at best provide an “illusion of inclusion.” At worst, as in the Hungarian case, under the veil of this illusion, they in fact realize a politics of exclusion in respect of their constituency. Bozóki presents an in-depth historical genealogy of Hungarian populism. Yet, notably, the author argues that the recent past is not the key to explaining the timely resurgence of populism along the Danube. Communism better explains the failures of populism than its successes. Hungarian society responded to Kádárism primarily with individual survival strategies. It became mistrustful of the strong state and rather weary of any type of personality cult. The economic transformation only strengthened the public’s disillusion regarding the possibilities of collective mobilization, as those whose moderate welfare became endangered preferred to redeem whatever there was to redeem through the familiar informal channels. In contrast, when it comes to preparing the grounds for populist radicalism, the decade of technocratic austerity politics has proved to be much more effective. The dissatisfaction with austerity—advertised in tandem with European integration as the only acceptable road to follow—tipped the electoral balance in favor of anti-liberal retrenchment, nationally-tinted “middle-of-the-road” economic unorthodoxy and the search to assign blame for ordinary suffering usually to ex-communists and foreigners or both. Moreover, in Bozóki’s view, Victor Orbán’s populist turn, the conservative cultural repertoire notwithstanding, was a prolonged and conscious effort to modernize the Right in terms of communication strategy and support structure.

While the vitality of populism in East Central Europe is not exclusively a matter of past ideas, the *longue durée* of political ideas, which under certain conditions become “usable pasts,” does still matter, as Juraj Buzalka’s essay about the Slovak case suggests. A side-effect of the concept’s popularity in contemporary debates was the rediscovery, in historical scholarship and elsewhere, of the great variety of East Central European historical populisms, some of which were actually quite progressive and modernizing movements in otherwise authoritarian and conservative settings. This is perhaps why unearthing populist traditions after 1989 (literally, in the case of Andrej Hlinka and Milan Hodža, which Buzalka describes) has been undertaken for many different purposes, including

aligning national identities with European integration. Still, the success of such initiatives has been limited, largely as a retroactive effect of the politics of memory of the old regime: the more authoritarian and nationalist variants of populism were targeted by communist propaganda, the easier it became to re-legitimize those traditions under the label of anti-communism after 1989. (A prime example of this effect is the post-mortem career of Andrej Hlinka). On the other hand, Buzalka concludes that progressive populisms of Milan Hodža's variety still sound like something of an oxymoron in today's political discourse.

Post-communist Left without the Post-communists

Perhaps the single most important gap in terms of the major political traditions that this volume does not manage to fill are the studies on the political thought of the successors of the old regime's ruling parties. The reason why this topic has been under-researched is not clear. After all, the post-communists had their chance to influence the fate of the region's countries several times and in several ways. In matters such as European integration, transitional justice or the separation of church and state, they have been instrumental in setting the tone of public debate. However, it is perhaps not a coincidence that not only from the point of view of the anti-communist Right but also for ex-dissidents and the new Left successor parties have not done much to do with ideas but rather with party pragmatism and technocratic governance.

In contrast, the contributions by Ágnes Gagyí, Maciej Gdula, Stanislav Holubec and Zsófia Lóránd (who examine the cases of Hungary, Poland, Czechia and ex-Yugoslavia respectively) demonstrate that the intellectual contours of the region's non-post-communist Left are not only brimming with ideas, but also quite mutually convergent.

Not incidentally, the first shared assumption of the new post-socialist, non-communist Left is that the ex-communist Left, together with ex-dissident liberals, represents the party of the "transition consensus:" rational modernizers, disposing of efficient apparatuses of mass politics, but otherwise mistrustful of citizens. Closet neoliberals in the worst case, and at best functional conservatives (in a period of so many conservative revolutionaries), they propose palliatives to shock-therapy but do not represent an intellectual alternative to the transition paradigm of economic austerity and technocratic governance. This shared negative image has a number of local variations. The animosities between the successor and alternative

Left seem weaker in the Czech case, which is perhaps explained by the generally less agonistic character of Czech political culture. The Hungarian “alternative Left” is seemingly more critical of nomenclature privatization and political capitalism than their Polish comrades, and also much more explicit in their judgment of the neo-colonial nature of the transition consensus.

The latter has perhaps something to do with the interesting argument of Maciej Gdula about the non-synchronicity of power and ideas in the region: while politically the 1990s belonged to the parties of transition consensus, the increasingly dominant conservative paradigm of critique during the liberal transition prepared the Right’s path to power in the 2000s. Extrapolating this trend, the increasing popularity and intellectual infrastructures of the “new Left” in recent years constitutes the promise of the radiant future whose circumstances are made all the more propitious by the current crisis. While this is yet to be seen, and despite regional differences in chronology, Gdula’s claim seems to be corroborated by recent cases of high-profile defectors from the conservative and liberal camps such as Gáspár M. Tamás or Andrzej Walicki. This phenomenon has been especially notable in the Czech context with ex-liberals Václav Bělohradský and Jiří Pehe, whose political metamorphoses, according to Stanislav Holubec, can be regarded as an indicator of the Left’s growing popularity.

Importantly, this non-synchronic cycle of power and ideas also means that some variants of the liberal transition critique, initially launched by the Right, could in other circumstances be easily integrated into the ideological repertoire of the Left. After all, the criticism of neo-colonialism, the *nomenklatura* or procedural and technocratic governance has had its progressive champions and in a few cases these critiques have in fact been launched by formerly left-leaning intellectuals such as Jadwiga Staniszkis and Zdzisław Krasnodębski. However, since the Right said it first, it is quite easy for the representatives of the transition consensus to marginalize those further to the Left, identifying leftist and conservative critiques under the label of “extremism.”

What appears to be another common element of the intellectual repertoire of the non-post-communist Left in the region is the diagnosis that the threat of right-wing extremism testifies to the failure of the transition consensus. Unlike the liberals and the ex-communists, who seem to share the assumption that right-wing extremism has its roots in the perennial cultural conservatism of the societies in the region, whose xenophobia, nationalism and anti-liberalism was frozen rather than modernized by the

communist experience, the “alternative Left” commonly believes that the stage for the extreme Right was set by the transition consensus itself. The structural preconditions analyzed in depth in the Hungarian case by Ágnes Gagyi include a glaring injustice in the process of capitalist restructuring with too many “necessary sacrifices;” ex-communist and ex-dissident elite convergence around a technocratic model of governance, which provided little space for the inclusion of popular political demands, leaving those sacrificed also without political representation; finally the “globalist eschatology,” a naïve belief in the advantages of integration into the world economy without a proper understanding of the economic vulnerability of the periphery vis-à-vis the economic core. Moreover, Gagyi examines the structural preconditions that set the stage for the emergence of right-wing extremism in the broader context of a global trend towards post-politics: Jobbik or Samoobrona, from this perspective, have more to do with Jean-Marie Le Pen or Jörg Haider than with the historical extreme Right in the region.

All this leaves the non-post-communist Left with a grand strategic dilemma. On the one hand, there is the temptation to form a common front with the parties of the elite consensus to avoid the threat of the Right (the motive of the ex-dissident and ex-communist alliance in the first place), which at the same time means however forsaking the autonomy of critical judgment. On the other hand, there is the desire to take the populist lesson seriously and to produce a better alternative for their constituency. This would mean remaining independent and facing the danger of political marginalization. Incidentally, there seems to be a certain historical irony here. A common front strategy was historically a strategy of political blackmail in which the weaker party was always forced to concede its political principles in the name of the unity of the progressive camp. But whereas in the interwar period it was the liberal principles that were constantly put into question for “playing into the hands of the enemy,” after 1989 this situation was reversed: the liberal principles have a strong disciplining force, whereas traditionally left-wing popular sympathies look suspicious.

Finally, we must note that “alternative Left” is a not an unambiguous term. It binds together the dissident (in post-socialism) and the new radical democratic Left, who share a common critical position about the transition, but who also expose significant generational differences. For the old Left, the transition’s unfulfilled promise is understood in the light of an earlier radical, historical moment, such as the Hungarian October, the Prague Spring, or the Carnival of Solidarity, which cast a long shadow

over its members' political biographies. Failure of transition is for them a failure to redeem this historic legacy. On the whole, the new Left is much less prone to read 1989 through the prism of the earlier radical moments. In part, it is because the group tends to seek identification with their contemporaries, sometimes through the global heritage of May 1968. This is partially because the discourse of the "unfinished revolution" is another element of progressive vocabulary intercepted by the conservatives. However, this volume also testifies to a contrary trend: the "new Left," exemplified at best in Poland and Hungary, is not willing to leave the politics of memory to the Right, but increasingly realizes the necessity of formulating a "patriotism of the Left." This would include re-inscribing their political genealogy in the progressive legacy of domestic political traditions and re-defined national historical narratives.

The "new Left" itself is not a clear identity either. The "new" is a historical concept born out of the radical 1968 upheaval, not simply a generational marker. Incidentally, some of the authors are more faithful to this historical interpretation (in this sense the new Left's mission is to redeem the May 1968 legacy in a region where the reputation of the Sixty-Eighters has been highly contested by both conservatives and dissident liberals), while others posit an even newer Left, one that brings back the question of economic inequality and perennial social conflict in capitalism to the fore. Another set of differences surrounds the institutional place of the Left. While some of the social movements see themselves as part of an ethical and/or global civil society following in the footsteps of local traditions of anti-politics, others place emphasis on the importance of working within the framework of the institutions of political modernity, such as parties or trade unions. Contesting transition means something different to different variants of the new Left. For radical environmentalists in Poland, Hungary, and the Czech Republic, 1989 does not represent a historical watershed (even if falling short of its promise), but to the contrary, another cycle of aggressive and thoughtless modernization with little concern for the sustainability of human and non-human habitats. While there is little nostalgia for socialism in terms of economic equality, feminists seem justified in seeing the decades after 1989 as ones of growing conservative and nationalist hegemony with detrimental effects for the rights of women and LGBT communities. Such a process had especially drastic consequences in the case of former Yugoslavia, as explained by Zsófia Lóránd.

Politics of History: From Local to Transnational

The last section of the volume deals with the broad and widely discussed field that in many ways predetermined the political cultures of the countries in the region: the politics of history and politics of memory. Yet our studies try to approach the topic from an unconventional perspective. Dealing with the past does not include only the totalitarian and authoritarian (both fascist and communist) past that was understandably at the center of the post-socialist identity conflict and thus also at the center of the hitherto academic historical memory research. It also comprises the democratic revolutions of 1989, as the reader can see in many studies of this volume, not least in the preceding post-socialist Left section. The chapter written by James Mark et al touches on this exact issue, namely that a critical reading of 1989 tended to entail a skeptical interpretation of the “liberal transition” that formed a backdrop for the political forces and movements coming either to power or taking a firm position in public discourses in many of the region’s countries in the late nineties or early twenty-first century. Yet the narratives of communism’s collapse and post-socialism’s birth (not only at the turn of the century but throughout the decades since 1989, as the authors demonstrate), became a source of great political contestation. Focusing on the Czech Republic, Germany, Hungary, Poland, and Slovakia, this chapter explores the path of those who attempted to make 1989 part of a positive post-socialist national identity based on democracy and national-political freedom. It also looks at those who rejected this political vision of 1989 and instrumentalized the memory of a “victorious 1989” for their own political gain, or those who refused to commemorate an event that they viewed as a betrayal, a moment of great opportunities lost, or a historical mythology providing “cultural ballast” to support unwanted forms of western political and economic colonization.

In general the study highlights the fact that the attempts to establish a broader and consensual memory of 1989 did not meet with much success and that the major anniversaries usually contributed to further divisions rather than national political unifications. If anything it often proved easier for the political elites to present 1989 to an international audience as a story of national pride in their country’s contributions to European freedom and unity than to commemorate it as an authentic domestic story of overcoming communism. The comparative perspective identifies two partial exceptions, that of Czechia and Germany, which interestingly demonstrated similar successful attempts to place the memory of 1989 into a larger historical narrative that highlighted a traditional fight for

democracy and freedom. Eventually turning towards the local and supra-national levels, the chapter briefly explores other actors who rejected a politicized understanding of 1989 and made an effort to link their own local experiences of revolution to a more transnational message of European or global unity, or the spread of world peace and human rights. They thus attempted to show that 1989, despite being overly politicized, still carries the potential to serve as a source of quite different critical readings of the most recent past.

Focusing on one of today's most discussed cases, Gábor Egry shows that in Hungary it was not only the revolution of 1989 but also that of 1956 that failed to lead to the creation of a consensual national historical memory. Its foundations marked by sharp ideological divides and an agonistic political culture, post-socialist Hungary was greatly affected by different if not mutually exclusive readings of the recent past, a phenomenon developed well before the negotiated revolution of 1989. From this point of view, what is happening today in Hungary in terms of the complete restructuring of the country's political sphere is a result of highly ideologically driven politics based on a vision of the re-establishment of the nation as a political community in its most "authentic" form of existence. Trying to analyze the roots of the recent Hungarian development, similar to the authors Szűcs and Bozóki, Egry approaches the problem from the point of view of the construction of a political community and its underlying historical narratives; in other words, the respective policies of history and memory. Hence he portrays the two competing concepts of political community in the period of post-socialism, that of the "nation" with a strong essentializing bias and that of the "republic" with a similarly strong constructivist bias. Even though nationalism has been a much stronger political concept and unifier in modern Hungarian history than republicanism, after 1989 these two opposing concepts became the focus of two equally strong political movements whose struggle peaked later between 2004 and 2010. Given the importance of the overall reading of modern history for the construction of a certain political community, for Egry, the reorganization of the state after 2010 is simply an impractical way of ensuring the dominance of one party. It is the realization of a form of existence that, from the point of view of its adherents, corresponds to an alleged authentic national life.

At the core of Stevo Đurašković's chapter is an example of highly ambiguous identity, and thus history of politics. He demonstrates how the Slovak left-wing nationalist populist Movement for Democratic Slovakia (*Ludová strana—Hnutie za demokratické Slovensko*, HZDS) led by

Vladimír Mečiar gained power in the early 1990s by appropriating the national identity-building discourse developed by Slovak national-communist intellectuals in the post-1968 “normalization” period. Briefly outlining the basic pre-communist concepts of the Slovak national identity-building process delimited against both Hungarian and Czech national projects, Ďuraškovič shows their appropriation by the communist national identity-building narrative symbolized at best by the writer Vladimír Mináč, the main cultural ideologist of the Slovak plebeian national communist mythos. At the heart of Ďuraškovič’s analysis are the intriguing twists of the nascent left-wing populist politics represented by Mečiar and his search, strengthened by the breakup of the Czechoslovak federation in 1993, for a full-blown national identity-building narrative. The stakes were high and dilemmas complex, as the populist post-socialist historical narrative should simultaneously be nationalist but also distanced from the “dark legacy” of the Slovak war-time fascist state. As a unsurprising way out, the Minačian narrative built on the anti-Czechoslovakist reading of a progressive Slovak left-wing tradition (exemplified mainly by Mináč’s interpretation of the 1944 Slovak National Uprising), which proved to be the most flexible. It successfully delegitimized Mečiar’s political opponents and mobilized the potentially broader popular support that his Movement gained in the early 1990s.

Whereas most of the texts in the present volume analyzing the politics of history in the post-socialist context understandably focus on the encounters of the communist past with redefined national history narratives and the construction of post-socialist national identities, Zoltán Dujisin, in the volume’s closing study, applies a different perspective. He examines how the politicized narratives of “communist totalitarianism,” or what some call the “communist-crimes-centered narratives,” coming from new EU member states institutionalize themselves on a European level and how that resonates with the broader European “regime of remembrance.” Focusing on the state-run institutions for the memory of communism established in the region in the last fifteen years, Dujisin follows their increasing supra-national cooperation and surprising convergence in many areas, implying an alignment of memory regimes that attempt to construct three common defining dimensions: mnemonic substance (the transnational narrative is totalitarianism), modes of remembrance, and memory practices. Despite the fact that most of these institutions and their subsequent historical, political, and anticommunist patriotic discourses are highly contested in domestic environments, their alignment on a European level allows these memory actors to present their discourse as implicitly

consensual and representative of the respective countries. Furthermore, they manage through a skillful political (Reconciliation of European Histories) and scholarly (Platform of European Memory and Conscience) alliance to present themselves on European platforms as the carriers of a neglected Eastern European voice.

Yet beyond the ostensible political and diplomatic correctness, there is a deeper rift between the two regimes of remembrance, namely the “politics of regret” promoted by Brussels on the basis of a global Holocaust memory and a developing Western European consensus, and the “politics of truth,” based on prevalently right-wing, anti-communist and anti-totalitarian readings of the recent (East) European past pushed forward by the transnational alliance of post-communist memory-makers. The group not only easily uses the developed EU memory-politics opportunity structures, but also takes advantage of the fact that many European-level Western actors are not well acquainted with the local cultural-political context. In this way they promote an alternative memory regime questioning the current status of Nazism as the worst chapter in European History and a monolithic understanding of the Holocaust as humankind’s greatest evil.

Concluding Remarks

The main purpose of the present volume is to offer the perspective of intellectual history as one of the possible useful venues for further research, creating a critical distance from the “transition period” or the “era of post-socialism.” Its aims are exploratory and its intention is to provoke discussion and further investigation.

Not only due to the limitations of a paper medium, the volume, while filling a few gaps, makes the existence of others more glaring. What holds true for the above-mentioned case of this volume being an intellectual history of post-communism without the post-communists is also true for a range of other topics. Worth singling out are discourses on support and contestation toward European integration, something that, like the politics of history, cuts across political divisions. Similarly, while it seems certain that religion in East Central Europe has had more legions than the proponents of secularization, the intellectual and social entanglement of politics and religion in the region still awaits proper historicization, especially as far as comparative and transnational approaches are concerned.

All in all, one of the possible advantages of this volume might be the benefit of hindsight provided by historians who are simultaneously wit-

nesses and actors of the recent historical period in question. It is for the reader to judge whether hindsight brings us closer to understanding the historicity of the period in East Central Europe following 1989. We assume that there might be some generational differences. More experienced readers might even recognize their own “songs of innocence” in these pages. Some will be tempted to re-live them in vivid detail, which could still bear attributes of the present. Others might be eager to reflect upon them from the perspective of their own experience. It is much more plausible that for younger readers, the distance between then and now will be more obvious. Many of the dilemmas described here are no longer a matter of passionate concern for those that know from personal experience only the current times and often perceive it as a time of exhaustion of the available political languages and narratives about the past. From this perspective, the post-Cold War polarities, such as an open versus closed society, Europeanist aspirations versus national authenticity, and narratives of unfinished revolution, both in the name of self-management and retroactive justice, are products whose expiration date has arrived. Nonetheless, the editors hope that this volume will be received as something more than a gesture of turning the pages of history. Their greatest hope is that it will provide help in making more informed choices in a world where 1989 possibly no longer casts its imperative shadow.

Five Faces of Post-Dissident Hungarian Liberalism

A Study in Agendas, Concepts, and Ambiguities

FERENC LACZÓ

The Liberal Moment

This paper is a study of post-dissident liberal discourse in the early years of Hungarian political democracy.¹ At this time, liberalism was not merely a major political force represented by two parties in Parliament that together won around a third of the popular vote. The share of liberals among top intellectuals has in all likelihood even significantly exceeded the overall share of the liberal vote in post-1989 Hungarian democracy.² Leading liberal representatives were widely recognized, even if not necessarily respected (and sometimes downright resented) for their rather exceptional levels of intellectual sophistication and unusually broad international horizons. In short, liberals not only had a strong political presence right after 1989 but had a high level of intellectual capital as well, justifying the claim that they enjoyed *a moment of intellectual dominance*.³

Moreover, liberals could also try to capitalize on the unique moral credibility they derived from the anti-dictatorial commitments they had explicitly

¹ I would like to thank participants of the conference *Liberal Democracy, Authoritarian Pasts and the Legacy of 1989* that took place in Prague, members of my former institute, the *Imre Kertész Kolleg Jena* and participants of the Concepta workshop *Liberals and Liberalisms* who commented on my presentation based on this paper. I would like to thank Zoltán Gábor Szűcs in particular for his comments and criticism of an earlier version of this paper: several parts greatly benefitted from his insightful contributions.

² It certainly continues to exceed it now when liberalism does not have any self-confessed parliamentary representative.

³ In his discussion of the use of national history in the political life of the country at this time, Zoltán Gábor Szűcs labeled the period *The Antallian Moment*, paraphrasing J.G.A. Pocock's *The Machiavellian Moment*. I am paraphrasing him in turn, but not in order to contest his claim but rather to offer an alternative perspective to his, which centers on József Antall and his political language of national history. See Zoltán Gábor Szűcs, *Az antalli pillanat* (Budapest: L'Harmattan, 2010).

shown before 1989, particularly in the 1980s—even if this fact set them apart from the large majority of their own voters and thus the advisability of emphasizing former opposition in an institutionally democratic setting remained contested.⁴ Far from all leading liberals in the post-1989 world had actively pursued the path of opposition and had suffered from the official marginalization that often preceded it. Still, nearly all those with documented anti-dictatorial activities of “conspicuous exercising of rights” (revolving around putting the principles of freedom of organization, speech, and publication into practice) belonged to liberal parties in the early 1990s, a time when they could enjoy a relatively brief moment of dominance—or, as some of them did, decide to stay out of politics altogether.

What leading post-dissident liberal intellectuals wrote during their years of intellectual dominance is the subject of this paper on the history of Hungarian political discourses. Its general aim is to show the variety of liberal discourses and reflect on their *ambiguities* in a post-communist context. More concretely, I wish to clarify *the key concepts* of post-dissident liberals and identify some of their *main stances* to thereby reflect on the liberal spectrum. Moreover, I will devote some attention to the embeddedness of Hungarian liberal discourses in transnational discussions.

The paper provides a study of *Beszélő*, the successor of the chief Hungarian *Samizdat* organ released in the 1980s.⁵ In late 1989, with the end of the communist regime, *Beszélő* switched to a weekly format and continued to appear as such until 1995 when it was transformed into a monthly that ceased publication at the end of 2012.⁶ I chose to analyze this publica-

⁴ János Kis maintained that SzDSz could handle the matter liberally: “We are not forced to declare ourselves as the sole overthrowers of the previous system and we do not try to depict everyone else as a collaborator. We can easily accept that others played their part too.” János Kis, “A demokratikus ellenzéktől a Szabad Demokraták Szövetségéig,” *Beszélő* 46 (1993). All translations from Hungarian are done by the author.

⁵ László Kristóf Balázs and Zsolt Zádori, ed., *Beszélő: samizdat, hetilap, folyóirat* (Budapest: Stencil Kulturális Alapítvány, 2006), CD-ROM Publication. Beyond its website www.beszelo.hu, *Beszélő* released all issues of its first 25 volumes (1981–2005) in digital format on a CD entitled *A Beszélő 25 éve*. I have used this CD throughout, and that is also why the titles of articles are not followed by exact page numbers in the footnotes.

⁶ By 1995, the basic political position of liberals under analysis changed: their party, the Alliance of Free Democrats (*Szabad Demokraták Szövetsége*, SzDSz), controversially entered a coalition government with the Hungarian Socialist Party (*Magyar Szocialista Párt*, MSzP), the chief successor party that acquired a majority of parliamentary seats in 1994 (making the choice for a coalition government optional). A divisive decision to begin with, the commitment to MSzP arguably proved fatal for the long-term chances of liberal politics as it enabled the right to monopolize attacks on the post-communist establishment.

tion for two chief reasons. Due to its aforementioned pre-1989 history, *Beszélő* possessed an unmatched symbolic value and had a well-recognized place as one of the chief liberal political forums in the early 1990s—even if a new editorial board was responsible for its release after 1989 and it tended to object to the direct identification of their journal with the Alliance of Free Democrats (*Szabad Demokraták Szövetsége*, SzDSz). *Beszélő* also appears as the best possible empirical source since several people associated with the rather prestigious though informal *Beszélő* circle became actively involved in SzDSz but continued to contribute regularly. *Beszélő* served as a crucial forum for such intellectuals in politics to formulate and exchange their views, define their positions, and make them accessible to a broader and largely sympathetic public: it is no exaggeration that the weekly was an important institution of liberal politics in its own right.

I shall tell the story of post-dissident liberalism based on the output of individual authors. Five of the most significant of them will serve as the subjects of case studies below: István Eörsi (1931-2005), János Kis (b.1943), György Konrád (b.1933), Miklós Szabó (1935-2000), and Gáspár Miklós Tamás (b.1948). While they were all highly cultivated authors, expressing rather divergent views and developing unmistakable styles, I hope that parallel microanalyses of their texts can shed light on typical (as well as idiosyncratic) features of liberal political discourse in a post-communist democracy. While my paper provides micro-studies of these five authors, I claim that *Beszélő* published their ideas on the mezzo level, i.e. between their major works and their more immediate political remarks uttered in direct verbal confrontation with others.⁷ As their prominence is generally recognized, I believe no one would seriously question the inclusion of any of these five authors, though the list could be extended by further names of similar importance.⁸ The reason I chose these authors

⁷ Arguably, their main works are: Gáspár Miklós Tamás, *Törzsi fogalmak* (Budapest: Atlantisz, 1999); Miklós Szabó, *Politikai kultúra Magyarországon, 1896–1986. Válogatott tanulmányok* (Budapest: Medvetánc, 1989); István Eörsi, *Időm Gombrowicz-csal. Naplónapló* (Budapest: Pesti Szalon, 1994); György Konrád and Iván Szelényi, *Az értelmiség útja az osztályhatalomhoz. Esszé* (Budapest: Gondolat, 1978), or as an individual author: György Konrád, *A látogató* (Budapest: Magvető, 1969); János Kis, *Az állam semlegessége* (Budapest: Atlantisz, 1997).

⁸ They have also been the subject of various studies and laudatory volumes. On Eörsi see János Kis and József P. Körössi, eds., *Időnk Eörsivel* (Budapest: Noran, 2007). On Tamás see Péter György and Sándor Radnóti, eds., *A másként-gondolkodó* (Budapest: Élet és Irodalom, 2008). On Szabó see Iván Zoltán Dénes, ed., *Liberalizmus és nemzet-*

was partly pragmatic: they all made between 15 and 49 contributions (in decreasing order: Tamás 49, Szabó 39, Eörsi 27, Kis 20, Konrád 15), i.e. more than just a few, but were not among the constant contributors who made hundreds of contributions in the course of the period.⁹ Moreover, all five of them were born between 1931 and 1948, and thus in 1989 they constituted the middle generation.

They were not narrow specialists of a single academic field but tended to be well versed in several. János Kis and Gáspár Miklós Tamás are both trained philosophers with notable interests in political philosophy. György Konrád earned his degree in Hungarian but is also known for his expertise in urban planning and sociology as well as having served as the president of the International PEN in the period under scrutiny.¹⁰ István Eörsi was trained in German and English studies, active as a poet, writer, playwright and publicist and known (like Kis) to have been influenced by the philosophy of György Lukács decades before 1989.¹¹ Last but not least, Miklós Szabó was a leading Hungarian historian who combined locally unmatched knowledge of the development of conservative and radical right-wing forces in the period of the Dual Monarchy in a wider European comparative frame with courageous discussions of Soviet history at the

tudat. Dialógus Szabó Miklós gondolataival (Budapest: Argumentum–Bibó István Szellemi Műhely, 2008). See also Ronald Dworkin, ed., *From Liberal Values to Democratic Transition: Essays in Honor of János Kis* (Budapest–New York: CEU Press, 2008).

⁹ People whom I might have added, except that they made too few contributions include Iván Pető with eight, Péter Tölgyessy with seven and Miklós Haraszti with three pieces of writing. János Eörsi with his 338, Ottilia Solt with her 335, Ferenc Kőszeg with his 269 or Sándor Révész with his 213 articles evidently belong to the latter group: they were chiefly responsible for keeping the weekly going. Studying their texts would doubtlessly prove fruitful, but combining the two tasks (that of studying five of the most influential or shall I say representative thinkers and the most regular contributors) would exceed the limits of a single paper. Not to mention the complication that there is a difference between the discourse of occasional contributors, who tended to publish only when they had special reasons, and regular ones, who had to complete texts under greater time pressure.

¹⁰ The expertise he gained as urban planner is reflected in his György Konrád, *A városlapító* (Budapest: Magvető, 1977).

¹¹ See György Lukács, *Megélt gondolkodás: Életrajz magnószalagon* (Budapest: Magvető, 1989). The interview was made by István Eörsi and Erzsébet Vezér. Eörsi edited the volume. The Marxist revisionist stances once taken by some leading liberals have remained a source of (often malignant) disagreement in post-communist Hungary. The declining relevance of the Marxist frame of interpretation is well documented in András Kovács, ed., *Marx a negyedik évtizedben*, which appeared as a samizdat volume in 1977.

Flying University. However, as dissidents marginalized by Kádárist officialdom, their formal qualifications before 1989 mattered little anyway.¹²

János Kis, or the Liberalism of Threats

As the informal leader of the democratic opposition and then party president of SzDSz between February 1990 and November 1991, János Kis aimed to reflect on topical political questions and discuss relevant matters of liberal tactics and strategy in an argumentative and occasionally self-reflexive manner.¹³ Kis was one of those politically engaged intellectuals who did not accept that democratic politics could only be about mobilizing slogans and sharp dichotomies or, more generally, the ever more extreme reduction of complex realities for the sake of gaining popularity and votes. His dry sense of humor helped him explain why SzDSz would reject demagoguery: "It would not look good on us. The electorate would simply not believe lies if we uttered them."¹⁴ He seemed especially glad to belong to a party where doubting was considered a virtue, explicitly praising this as the very best characteristic of SzDSz.¹⁵ Solidly declaring that his party engendered virtuous truthfulness, Kis arguably had great talent for populism in anti-populist garb.

In spite of often being seen as a representative of a political tradition in which radicalism played an important role as an ally of liberalism, Kis was personally known as a man of reason and moderation. He was ready to accept that SzDSz inherited its confrontational style from the democratic opposition, but warned of the consequent dangers for the party.¹⁶ He recurrently identified the need to overcome "confusion" and the "atmosphere of hysteria" that in his eyes dominated much of Hungarian politics.

¹² The exception here was Szabó who, in spite of his dedication to the memory (and politics) of 1956, was employed in his profession as a historian. He was promoted to the position of researcher at the Historical Institute of the Hungarian Academy of Science in 1967.

¹³ In fact, more than 3/4 of his contributions to *Beszélő* between 1989 and 1995 were made before the end of 1991.

¹⁴ János Kis, "A szabadelvű üzenet," *Beszélő* 27 (1992).

¹⁵ János Kis, "Tehetetlen kormány, elégedetlen nép," *Beszélő* 9 (1991). Even when speaking about the situation after the victory of SzDSz at the local elections in the fall of 1990, he appeared critical about the performance of this party and strongly distinguished the gains in their popularity from changes in the mood of the country (which he thought was worsening). János Kis, "A magyar demokrácia válsága nem végzet," *Beszélő* 48 (1990).

¹⁶ Kis, "A magyar demokrácia."

Through such seemingly moderate and rationalist rhetoric, Kis aimed to position himself outside the political battleground from where he could judge others. Thus, while his rhetoric appeared emphatic, he could also easily be accused of exclusivism, of wanting to appropriate rationalism for the position of a political minority.

Kis made his first contribution to the very first issue of the weekly in late September 1989, when he warned his readers that the split of the communist party should not take the country by surprise. While articulating notable threats that would emerge from both the internal split of the communists (more uncertainty and greater threat of violent crackdown and confrontation) and the maintenance of communist unity (the chance of the apparatuses to largely survive the changes due to their protection by more reformist leaders), Kis stressed the eminent responsibility of the newly emerging political parties.¹⁷ At the same time, he established a dichotomy here that was to be employed by him over and over again. He opposed the image of threats (arguably the chief referent he used to indicate that the times were transitory) to the possibility of moderation, national resolution, and democratic consolidation. In other words, his elaborate considerations of threats were meant to underline the central value of political and social calmness.¹⁸

In late 1989, the self-identification of Kis was that of a committed democrat. He not only presented the lack of national fame as a severe problem for anti-communist political actors, but explicitly warned of the return of Hungarian political life to “the times of Mikszáth” already before the election campaign, criticizing “building castles in the air, fraudulent and delusional politics.”¹⁹ Employing the discourse of “Hungarian illusionism,” Kis thus made an early contribution to the discussion of the potential “return of the past” that was to enjoy great popularity in post-communist Hungary.²⁰

¹⁷ János Kis, “Ha szakad az MSZMP,” *Beszélő* 1 (1989).

¹⁸ Tellingly, the aim of his text from late 1989 entitled “A következő lépések” (The Next Steps) was to help “overcome the current bewilderment and uncertain situation.” János Kis, “A következő lépések – Kis János a politikai válságról,” *Beszélő* 3 (1989).

¹⁹ Kálmán Mikszáth (1847–1910), Hungarian writer whose works have often been evoked to symbolize the strong feudal characteristics of Hungary entering the modern period. Hungarian feudalism was one of the often evoked (and strongly charged) topoi of early post-communist democracy. On Mikszáth see the elaborate and in-depth study in literary history of Levente T. Szabó, *Mikszáth, a kételkedő modern. Történelmi és társadalmi reprezentációk Mikszáth Kálmán prózai poétikájában* (Budapest: L'Harmattan, 2007).

²⁰ János Kis, “Köztér Ottóval,” *Beszélő* 2 (1989).

In his next article published November 20, 1989, Kis described an “incredible acceleration” of time that appeared to foreshadow the collapse of the Soviet empire. Characteristic of his inclination to provide a balanced assessment, he mentioned increased uncertainty and the risk of a backlash next to the “dizzying new possibilities” and that the consequences were wholly unpredictable.²¹ Still, at this particular moment Kis maintained that caution was a bad adviser and argued in favor of speeding up the transition.

Later on, he explained that the post-communist Hungarian Socialist Party (*Magyar Szocialista Párt*, MSzP) must be made to account for the possessions it unrightfully owned but once this was achieved, it should be considered a parliamentary force like any other.²² In the context of this discussion, Kis held on to the belief that voting would legitimate parties in a democratic system and morally charged arguments about past behavior should not play a crucial role.²³ Coming from Kis, the logic of separating democratic politics and moral accountability can be considered surprising since he was otherwise keenly interested in maintaining moral standards in politics and would certainly not have accepted such a strong delineation of the two spheres when it came to his own party.²⁴ After all, as we saw above, Kis presented the free democrats as a party that followed a moral logic, pursued internal debates, and was committed to articulating the truth. I can only speculate that this compromise with more relativistic versions of morality had to do with his opposition to “doing politics with the past,” which he might well have seen as a favorite strategy of his more conservative and nationalistic opponents.

At the same time, Kis seemed deeply concerned about the deficiencies of Hungarian democratic transition, the lack of social involvement, the widening gap between elite groups and the Hungarian masses, and the under-organized nature of the latter.²⁵ He considered the lack of democ-

²¹ János Kis, “Bús tengeren...,” *Beszélő* 3 (1989).

²² János Kis, “A rendszer ellenzékéből a kormány ellenzéke – Beszéd az SzDSz rendkívüli küldöttgyűlésén,” *Beszélő* 16 (1990).

²³ He expressed this explicitly too: János Kis, “A demokratikus ellenzéktől a Szabad Demokraták Szövetségéig,” *Beszélő* 46 (1993).

²⁴ See, for instance, his János Kis, “Lehetséges-e az igazsághoz keresztülhazudni magunkat,” *Beszélő* 17 (1994). Later on, triggered by the eruption of the scandal surrounding the past of Péter Medgyessy, prime minister of Hungary between 2002 and 2004, János Kis wrote a book on morality and politics (available in English translation too). János Kis, *Politics as a Moral Problem*, trans. Zoltán Miklósi (Budapest–New York: CEU Press, 2008).

²⁵ János Kis, “Munkásokól vasököl,” *Beszélő* 5 (1990).

ratic experiences of the masses to be a very grave problem,²⁶ expressing sourness about the fact that “celebrations were supposed to take place but there was no celebration, not even for a single moment.”²⁷

Early in 1990, Kis predicted the emergence of a new European order. He hoped for a new, pan-European security arrangement and a lasting balance of power on the continent unseen since the beginning of the short twentieth century. He was convinced that Germany would prove to be an agent of further Europeanization this time and that the small states of East Central Europe would enjoy a fair measure of independence too. What worried him more was the internal order of the region, which he saw as heading towards open conflict unless otherwise regulated. In this respect his imagination seems to have immediately recalled the realities of the 1930s and early 1940s even after more than four decades of radically different historical realities.

To solve potential conflicts on time, Kis even offered a bargain to Hungary's neighbors. The first step consisted of calling to question the equality of the Hungarian minorities in the respective neighboring states, instead of the integrity of their borders. As the second step, Kis recommended the establishment of a loose Central European federation with Prague, Vienna, and Budapest at its center but hopefully with the involvement of Yugoslavia and Romania, emphasizing that the latter would also be in the interest of Hungarians.²⁸ In other words, Kis wanted to occupy the middle ground on the national question, opposing both “militant nationalism” and “sweeping the question under the carpet.” In doing so, he refuted both the Hungarian communist “bagatellization” of nationalism as well as the right-wing's instrumentalization. Rather surprisingly, he thus positioned himself rather similarly to the *népiek* (the ethnopopulists).²⁹

The first time that János Kis articulated a more explicit definition of what SzDSz stood for on the pages of *Beszélő* was during the election campaign of 1990, which also offered him a chance to distinguish his party from the Hungarian Democratic Forum (*Magyar Demokrata Fórum*, MDF), its main competitor. He claimed that SzDSz wanted “real, liberal democracy” with parliamentary opposition, alternating forces in government, independent media, and the protection of various kinds of minority groups.³⁰ He was in favor of a neutral state that not only tolerated but re-

²⁶ See, for instance, János Kis, “Az elit megmaradásának elvéről,” *Beszélő* 6 (1991).

²⁷ János Kis, “A megállapodás,” *Beszélő* 7 (1990).

²⁸ János Kis, “Jókedvünk tele,” *Beszélő* 1 (1990).

²⁹ János Kis, “Liberalizmus – ma,” *Beszélő* 38 (1990).

³⁰ János Kis, “Új reformkor vagy...?,” *Beszélő* 13 (1990).

spected the pluralism that existed in society. More concretely, standing on the platform of freedom and solidarity, he wanted to see the dominance of a free market economy and the strengthening of independent (i.e. non-communist) trade unions.³¹ In the course of the debate on the extent of SzDSZ support for market liberalization and whether it could be considered a leftist force, Kis spoke of SzDSz as a social-liberal force but denied the existence of a social democratic wing inside the party waiting to be more fully articulated. He was convinced that in the free democratic (i.e. *szabad demokrata*) tradition, state ownership and intervention were hardly attractive.³²

János Kis believed that the representatives of liberalism might have remained weak in Eastern Europe as a whole but it was still the most important political movement in the narrower East Central European region and was “the main force of progress” after the fall of communist regimes.³³ In his conception, liberalism was meant to be both a constituent part of the new political system and to provide its basic vein. In late 1990, Kis formulated his famous “liberal minimum” in this spirit. It consisted of five points that were meant to be consensually shared, namely the neutrality of the state in private matters, independent media, integration into the world market and economic catching up, resolute action combined with and preceded by negotiations, and the protection of the most vulnerable strata of society. At the same time, contesting the still rather influential liberal self-interpretation of MDF, he explained that there were “serious doubts whether MDF shared this interpretation of democracy.”³⁴ In other words, Kis tried to use his offer of substantial consensus as a direct tool of party political contestation. It is thus unsurprising that the responses to his proposed liberal minimum were also made in a polemical fashion.

In spite of such polemical doubts, Kis at first was consistently arguing in favor of stability. He explained that the country needed a stable government, and the MDF-led government should be recognized as such if only it accepted that SzDSz, the second most popular political party, was not a foreign (*nemzetidegen*) force.³⁵ Justifying the MDF-SzDSz pact signed right after the elections of 1990 that enabled the smooth functioning of the government in exchange for the chance given to the opposition

³¹ Kis, “A rendszer ellenzékéből a kormány.”

³² Kis, “A magyar demokrácia.”

³³ Kis, “Liberalizmus.”

³⁴ Kis, “Új reformkor.”

³⁵ Kis, “A rendszer ellenzékéből a kormány.”

to elect the President of the Republic, Kis explained that the stability of the democratic order constituted the common interest of both sides.³⁶ At the same time, while stressing that there were significant differences between the politics of history of the Free Democrats and members of the Democratic Forum, especially in relation to the inter-war period, Kis took a stance against threatening the voters with a “new Horthy era” as formulated most (in)famously by G.M. Tamás (to be discussed below).

However, soon Kis started to maintain that there were fundamental problems with the MDF-led government. Not even one-hundred days had passed since its establishment, and he was already convinced that the coalition felt an “insatiable nostalgia” for inter-war Hungary, while defining his own party as the party of those “who are resistant to every attempt to restore the relations of feudal (*úri*) Hungary.”³⁷ Simultaneously, Kis pointed to striking continuities in spite of seeming changes. He claimed that the bureaucracy of comrades was only replaced by a bureaucracy of servants, the anti-communism of MDF was both propagandistic and hypocritical, and the level of state centralization might even have increased.³⁸

In the middle of 1990, Kis continued to propagate the triad of liberal state, free market economy, and free society but now in direct contrast to the “feudal world (*urambátyám-világ*) in preparation.”³⁹ He argued that SzDSz was in favor of a “radical” and “real” system change but made legality the central question: old leaders had to be “replaced quickly, but in a lawful manner,” he would emphasize.⁴⁰ He reasoned that with the passing of the revolutionary moment, “there are no longer acceptable political means at hand to marginalize the members of the former ruling class who have remained in their positions.”⁴¹ At the same time, he assured that “if the revolution was successful in creating a new political system, then social development will move in a direction so that the old elites shall slowly be absorbed.”⁴² In short, the absence of campaigns against individuals was not a central problem: the real issue, as he maintained several times, was (the lack of) structural-institutional change.⁴³

³⁶ Kis, A megállapodás.

³⁷ János Kis, “Majdnem száz nap után,” *Beszélő* 36 (1990).

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ Kis, “megmaradásának elvéről.”

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³ Miklós Szabó recurrently used the same distinction in *Beszélő* to make the same point.

While Kis still wanted to occupy the position of anti-communist radical, he re-described this as a form of commitment to legally implemented transformation. In his articles between 1990 and 1991, we can thus detect growing tensions between his anti-communism and his increasingly pronounced “anti-anti-communism.”

In early 1991, he went even further in critiquing the post-communist present, claiming that the situation in Hungary “did not correspond to the normal conditions of a normal democracy.”⁴⁴ He still evoked the notion of threats, but this time in order to explain that the looming economic catastrophe constituted the prime danger, and its chances were greatly increased by the incompetence of the government. Kis asserted that making the MDF-led coalition collapse due to its “inner contradictions” (a term unmistakably borrowed from the Marxist vocabulary) would serve as the explicit goal of the Free Democrats in the future.⁴⁵ Arguably the formulation of this piece of criticism closely resembled the sociologically charged political language of the Socialists and enabled the (at first rather cautious) recognition of having a common cause, which would soon have major consequences.

György Konrád, or Anti-Politics as Liberal Politics

The texts György Konrád published in *Beszélő* are characterized by a striking duality. Konrád put great emphasis on questions of style, morality, and on some rather abstract political principles but neither discussed topical political questions, nor any of the actual dilemmas faced by politicians. His contributions to *Beszélő* strongly suggest that his distance from political life and the political elite of the new parliamentary democracy remained under defined. His political engagement seemed to be related primarily to the friendships he cherished and, revealingly, he continued to speak of *Beszélő* as a network based on personal sympathies. As the author of internationally famous anti-political musings in the 1980s, Konrád was thus perhaps the most significant representative of the former Hungarian dissidents who aimed to maintain his anti-political stance and de-

⁴⁴ Kis, “Tehetetlen.”

⁴⁵ Ibid. It sounded like sophistry when he distanced himself from those who called for the overthrow of the government: he was saying that public opinion had to demand new elections and SzDSz merely had to do everything to create the right kind of political atmosphere—to “help ripen preconditions” for new elections.

sired to occupy a meta-political position, namely that of the “independent intellectual,” understanding these as contributions to the liberal political agenda.⁴⁶

From the heights of his meta-position Konrád propagated dialogue and trust, honesty and serenity, balance and the sense of proportion as politically relevant values. He wished that his liberal political party would play the role of “animator of public opinion” and at the same time be “the party with conscience” that holds on to “transpolitical” standards of morality. He also wanted SzDSz to be the “*arbiter elegantiae*” in Hungarian politics, a party that combines the ethics and style of “sportsmanship.”⁴⁷ Tellingly, the only time he directly compared liberalism and conservatism, he did not relate to questions of content, but rather (once again) of style: he distanced himself from the “pompous but flat” rhetorical moves of Hungarian conservatives that were supposedly miles away from the easygoing, humorous and ironic style of expression he thought characteristic of liberals.⁴⁸ These self-praising auto-stereotypes were all part of his peculiarly liberal aestheticization of politics.

The concept of normality also played a key role in several of his texts. One of his central intentions was to show the abnormality of phenomena that paraded as normal, to reveal the absurdities inherent to modern society and the alienation and anxieties characterizing the life of individuals in it.⁴⁹ Describing the communist times, Konrád wrote that the authorities “considered the notion of intellectual criminality *normal*, they thought it was normal that I could qualify as a criminal simply because of what I wrote.”⁵⁰ He added that when he had tried to oppose this world of false conceptions and the seeming normality of authoritarian repression, he had perceived the world in very simple terms. In retrospect, he depicted this as a necessary strategy. If he had not been committed to such simple views “I should have thought I was crazy,” he explained, adding in his usual ironic,

⁴⁶ György Konrád, *Antipolitics: An Essay*, trans. Richard E. Allen (San Diego: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1994).

⁴⁷ Characteristically, in late 1993, some half a year before SzDSz controversially agreed to enter a coalition government with MSzP, he expressed his hope that “when SzDSz comes to power not only a new group of people will be in power but a new style, a new value system, more respect for and curiosity about people who excel.” György Konrád, “Pohárköszöntő – SzDSz-születésnap,” *Beszélő* 45 (1993).

⁴⁸ György Konrád, “Gondolatok egy liberális konferencia után,” *Beszélő* 38 (1990).

⁴⁹ Konrád was also a novelist and these kinds of descriptions seem to be a central aspect of many modernist literary texts.

⁵⁰ György Konrád, “Kőviskó és gólyafészek,” *Beszélő* 16 (1995).

jovial tone that the latter was “suggested to me many times.”⁵¹ On the other hand, his jocular tone was in marked contrast with what he presented as the lessons drawn from his life experience, where he arrived at conclusions such as “I am glad I was left alive. I have seen that provided the chance and given the temptation, people turn into scoundrels.”⁵²

In accordance with the epochal turn of European historical cultures away from heroization, his exposition of the “gift of normality” also meant questioning heroic pretense. He claimed that the real heroes were simple, humble men with consciences.⁵³ For him, this also implied that any definition of heroism was merely due to “momentary prejudice and politics.”⁵⁴ In the same spirit he opposed rhetoric and pomp—both these terms have strongly negative connotations in his vocabulary—despite his posing of many eminently rhetorical questions. Moreover, he employed the negatively loaded concept of resentment as much as any other. In a starkly redescriptive move, he claimed that the general tone employed by liberals was mocking rather than resentful. Continuing his redescriptive pursuits, he declared that “higher ideals” should be suspect: their main consequence supposedly was that people became “touchy” and “overly sensitive.”

On the other hand, Konrád repeatedly reflected on the strangeness of the early post-communist world where (to employ Peter Gay’s famous concept of Weimar culture) outsiders became insiders, “amateurs” acquired political power, and dissident habitus could heavily influence the ways of the new establishment. Writing about his encounter with Václav Havel when the latter was on a brief official visit to Budapest and more generally about the situation in Czechoslovakia, Konrád painted a surreal picture of how the Prague Castle turned “into the citadel of European avant-garde theater” due to Havel “filling the saloons of authority with all kinds of artist pals.”⁵⁵ In the same spirit, he expressed his hope that the leadership of his own party, the SzDSz, would be in harmony not through fixed rules and enforced discipline but in the manner of a creative jazz band full of originality and improvising talent.

⁵¹ Ibid.

⁵² Ibid.

⁵³ In this perspective, heroism was nothing more than the “accidentally conspicuous manifestation of decency.” György Konrád, “Muszáj-e hősnek lenni, ha nem lehet?,” *Beszélő* 49 (1993).

⁵⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁵ György Konrád, “Nehéz az elnök élete,” *Beszélő* 4 (1990).

Konrád repeatedly took a stance against the homogeneous nation state. He preferred to describe those who desired it in psychological terms and recurrently used the notion of hysteria. An image he distained depicted “the nationalist,” where a “national consciousness” supposedly filled “the whole person.”⁵⁶ While in Konrád’s eyes higher ideals were suspect as such, it was really their intertwined nature with questions of identity that made them truly dangerous. He would even maintain that any form of collective identity could only lead to the exclusion and oppression of minorities. Such simplistic dichotomizing was part and parcel of increased political polarization. In clear contrast to his auto-stereotyping as well as jocular tone of voice, it seems that Konrád’s fear of angry and militant collectivism was also a decisive determinant of his political position.

Somewhat curiously, Konrád had hardly anything to say on the legacy of communism and the role of post-communists. When he did address such topics, he preferred to express ideas in the context of the debate over the extent of justifiable moral compromise. When he mentioned anti-communism, he immediately related such “ideas of purification” to attempts to revive the discourse and symbolism of the Arrow Cross⁵⁷ movement and regime.⁵⁸ In this way, Konrád downplayed the importance of the recent dictatorial past both at the political community and state level. Only in 1993 did he tackle the question of continuity more directly when he took a clear stance *in favor* of it, arguing that “ceaseless violent changes of elites are dulling.”⁵⁹ He emphasized that Hungary needed a combination of rotating governments and continuity of the administration, thereby employing the *topos* of stability that was, as we have just seen, also a marked component of the political discourse of János Kis.

⁵⁶ György Konrád, “Identitás és hisztéria – Lapszéki jegyzetek a jugoszláviai harcokról,” *Beszélő* 32 (1991).

⁵⁷ The Arrow Cross Party (Nyilaskeresztes Párt) was a pro-Nazi party led by Ferenc Szálasi. After Miklós Horthy’s failed attempt to surrender and withdraw from the Axis the party formed a government known as the Government of National Unity from 15 October 1944 to 28 March 1945, and was responsible for the mass killings of Jews throughout the country in this period.

⁵⁸ György Konrád, “A sikeres Magyarország – A sikeres Magyarország? Miben és miből áll egy ország sikere?,” *Beszélő* 45 (1992). Rather tellingly, Konrád listed “blaming the former regime” in the following sequence of detestable political phenomena: “rhetoric, accusations, blaming the former regime, preparation of political trials, anti-Semitic remarks [*zsidózás*] and the use of fantasy to paint all kinds of wonderful horrific images.” *Ibid.*

⁵⁹ György Konrád, “Pohárköszöntő – SzDSz-születésnap,” *Beszélő* 45 (1993).

Konrád also discussed the country's options. Using dichotomizing rhetoric typical to political speech acts, he emphasized, "We can choose between two forms of patriotism, prideful or friendly."⁶⁰ This differentiation helped him present his own rather grandiose plans: "If we do not close ourselves into our own nationalism, we have the chance to take on the role of regional initiators," he wrote.⁶¹ He maintained that Hungary lies at "the crossroads of spheres of integration," and therefore, "if we did not push away our friends with combative nationalism, Budapest could be one of the cultural capitals of Europe."⁶² In other words, Konrád used a host of at least mildly nationalist *topoi* (such as the potential regional centrality of Hungary) even while nominally rejecting "collective identity."

Next to his frequent meta-political musings, Konrád occasionally also offered ideas on the right kind of liberal politics. According to him, the general aim of the country should be "to create a normal, Western, liberal-pluralist democracy...[that] performs on the world market and becomes part of the Western community of values."⁶³ He also asserted that governments should not propagate any ideology, nor should the state bureaucracy be allowed to show preference for certain ways of thinking over others when it comes to the treatment of people. What liberalism had to offer was a combination of "pragmatic mediation" with "the commitment to the basic principles and rules of the system."⁶⁴

More concretely, Konrád thought of his party as social-liberal, i.e. left of center in accordance with the American understanding of liberalism. He expressed himself in favor of an SzDSz fighting for a smaller and cheaper state, but above all, for the reconciliation of freedom and security. Once the post-communist Hungarian Socialist Party (*Magyar Szocialista Párt*, MSzP) became a force to be seriously reckoned with, he was eager to depict SzDSz as the party of the middle without which no Hungarian government on the left or the right could be formed. He proposed that SzDSz maneuver between conservative and social democratic values while pursuing its main goal of *polgárosodás* (*Verbürgerlichung* or em-bourgeoisement)—an idea that rose to great prominence as a counter-ideal to Kádárism and was later also heavily employed by Fidesz.

⁶⁰ György Konrád, "Margináliák a második forduló után," *Beszélő* 15 (1990).

⁶¹ György Konrád, "A megértés stratégiája," *Beszélő* 11 (1993).

⁶² Ibid.

⁶³ György Konrád, "A dzsesszbanda szelleme," *Beszélő* 27 (1992).

⁶⁴ Konrád, "Pohárköszöntő."

During the years of the Antall government, despite his claims of having a mediating role, Konrád employed many strongly anti-rightist dichotomies. For instance, he wrote of the opposition between “liberal” and “feudal” democracy. Elsewhere he contrasted *polgárosodás* with the feudal-authoritarian tradition, claiming that while achievement rules supreme in the modern world, loyalty serves as the highest value in the latter environment. Elsewhere he articulated his conviction that the division of powers and contractual relations between equals characterized the liberal order while the alternative was the dominance of threatening and exclusivist nationalism.

Given the political and intellectual context of Hungary in the early 1990s, it would be difficult not to interpret these words as providing a comparison between his party and the parties supporting the government, particularly the Hungarian Democratic Forum. In fact, in the moment of a great political crisis in early post-communist Hungary resulting from a taxi driver blockade, Konrád uttered the following moralizing statement: “No government has any right to show the arrogance of the powerful.”⁶⁵ In this moment of politicization, he suddenly returned to his belief in the defining role of trained intellectuals. He spoke of the need to establish an “expert government,” even though this clearly contradicted his highly favorable depictions of dissidents, amateurs, and artists in power.

To summarize, after 1989 Konrád defined liberal politics as anti-politics, which constituted a fine and not entirely successful balancing act between reconciliatory gestures and anti-rightist language. While he preferred to write about basic principles and matters of style rather than concrete questions of content, in moments of political tension he would explicitly reveal the political implications of his notionally anti-political stance: support for the liberal political agenda.

István Eörsi, or the Leftist Rebel as Liberal

It was among the fundamental convictions of István Eörsi that the world was essentially unjust and the only politically and morally laudable stance was that of the rebellious “citoyen-democrat.” Such rebels were not afraid to see “the total falsity of our civilization,”⁶⁶ he maintained, but neverthe-

⁶⁵ György Konrád, “A második figyelmeztetés (október 27-én este),” *Beszélő* (1990) Különszám (a taxis blokádról).

⁶⁶ István Eörsi, “Hazugságok háborúja,” *Beszélő* 5 (1991). This article was about the Gulf War in which, according to Eörsi, all sides were liars.

less held on to the belief that “whatever was arbitrary could also be changed.”⁶⁷ Accordingly, Eörsi understood his public role as that of an *intellectual guerilla*, defining his major aim in the following way: “I would like [my readers] not to believe a single word I say but to reconsider their views as a consequence of reading me.”⁶⁸

What worried him in particular was the weakness of the post-communist Left. “Having lost our revolutionary ideas and hopes, but continuing to view the world in which we live critically and considering it unworthy of much affection, the question is: what is left?” he pondered.⁶⁹ From an eminently leftist position, Eörsi continued to maintain that “Stalinism only really harmed leftist ideologies”⁷⁰ and that “beyond some political taboos, the only things that Kádár and his fellows would never have tolerated was the historical and class-based analysis of Soviet-type society.”⁷¹ At the same time, he was convinced that “history has not yet pronounced the last word on direct democracy.”⁷²

Eörsi believed that the “original goals and political philosophy” of SzDSz were based on the “complete catalogue of human rights.”⁷³ The way he used the discourse on human rights is thus largely in accordance with the interpretation Samuel Moyn recently provided in his book *The Last Utopia*, namely that it was on the ruins of earlier political utopias that human rights achieved prominence when idealists began to identify it as the cause of justice.⁷⁴ Discussing the political direction of his party, Eörsi maintained, once again in a characteristically leftist mode, that what was most sorely missing was a clear sense of the strata it represented and whose interests it supported.⁷⁵ “We should have proclaimed a social and

⁶⁷ István Eörsi, “...A tyúkölről és a palotáról,” *Beszélő* 4 (1995). Tellingly, the lessons of Nazism he discussed was what kind of catastrophes the uncritical respect for the laws of the times led to and what immense damage the sharp opposition between duties and responsibilities and the consequent refusal to identify ethical dilemmas can cause. István Eörsi, “Nagy esőzés után,” *Beszélő* 41 (1994).

⁶⁸ István Eörsi, “Mi süllyedt el a Titanickal? – Hans Magnus Enzensberger és Eörsi István beszélget,” *Beszélő* 25–26 (1992).

⁶⁹ Eörsi, “Mi süllyedt el a Titanickal?”

⁷⁰ István Eörsi, “Kitört a szabadság,” *Beszélő* 45 (1991).

⁷¹ István Eörsi, “Határ-esetek,” *Beszélő* 39 (1990).

⁷² István Eörsi, “Az időszerűtlen Donáth Ferenc időszerűsége,” *Beszélő* 30 (1991).

⁷³ István Eörsi, “Szóva tesztek egy ízléstelenséget,” *Beszélő* 48 (1991).

⁷⁴ Samuel Moyn, *The Last Utopia. Human Rights in History* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard UP, 2010). See also the collection of studies Stefan-Ludwig Hoffman, ed., *Human Rights in the Twentieth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2010).

⁷⁵ See especially István Eörsi, “Üröm az örömben,” *Beszélő* 2 (1991).

ideological alternative much more forcefully to appeal to those voters who have been disoriented or indifferent in the absence of socialist and social democratic parties,” he complained.⁷⁶

Living partly in Berlin at the time, Eörsi’s horizon was broad and he touched on many international themes. On the other hand, he rarely discussed timely Hungarian political questions and dichotomized the characteristics of government and opposition to a much lesser degree than György Konrád, for instance. He only occasionally wrote of, and even then just mentioned, the need to protect civil society against the threat of a new party state. At the same time, he depicted the post-communist moral condition as perverse: he was adamantly opposed to strong continuities in institutional practices and personnel.⁷⁷ Post-communism to him was an abnormal state, an environment in which those who expose politically protected criminality get criminalized.⁷⁸

Instead of discussing the character of Hungarian right-wing forces at greater length, Eörsi preferred to serve as a critic of what he saw as the submissive way of thinking pursued by his own friends and political allies who were supposedly trying to acquire the respect of the West at all costs. Eörsi was clearly upset about Eastern European attempts to merely copy the West: he could not understand why the region willingly condemned itself to unoriginality and seemed to discredit all untraveled roads without any serious consideration.⁷⁹ Moreover, he was negatively disposed towards the functioning of Western political systems and recurrently referred to acts of Western hypocrisy towards formerly communist countries.⁸⁰ He would even specifically address the immorality inherent to certain forms of capitalist “rationality” that made absurdities

⁷⁶ István Eörsi, “Kitört a szabadság,” *Beszélő* 45 (1991).

⁷⁷ For instance, he saw no changes in the army: he maintained that its personnel, structure, sphere of activity and spirit remained the same. István Eörsi, “Rendeződjünk oda,” *Beszélő* 2 (1990). Eörsi’s principled anti-communism had much to do with his role in 1956, his subsequent imprisonment and his dedication to preserving (and, if politically at all possible, reviving) its memory. See his memoirs on his imprisonment, István Eörsi, *Emlékezés a régi szép időkre* (Budapest: Napra-forgó, 1989).

⁷⁸ Discussing the fear of “the resurrection of a post-Stalinist party state” in early 1990, he maintained that “Through the examples I provided I wanted to show that this fear was unfounded. Resurrection would only be possible if it was already dead.” István Eörsi, “Rendeződjünk oda,” *Beszélő* 2 (1990).

⁷⁹ István Eörsi, “Dicsérgetések,” *Beszélő* 2 (1989).

⁸⁰ In his article “Határ-esetek,” for instance, he discussed how Western countries make travelling “freely available” and at the same time turn it into the privilege of the wealthy. István Eörsi, “Határ-esetek,” *Beszélő* 5 (1991).

possible that would have been inconceivable under a state socialist regime.⁸¹ Reflecting on human rights violations during the Cold War, he aimed to strike a balance between forms of violations present predominantly in the East and the West.⁸² On the one hand, he clarified that defending the planned economy with “egalitarian or lofty humanistic ideologies was as absurd as praising the beauty of a dead horse.”⁸³ On the other, he argued that the fact that the planned economy could not work should not make post-communist societies forget that capitalism was a “horse that bites.”

Eörsi proved sharply critical of post-communist Eastern Europe and the region’s foray into globalization. He stated that the region amounted to no more than “new markets, cheap labor, and political support” for the West “in its undeclared global war against the Third World.”⁸⁴ Eörsi wanted to spread awareness that regional backwardness and provincialism needed to be simultaneously overcome, but thought that finding sufficient resources to make this happen could prove extremely difficult.

He saw empirical as well as normative connections between economic development and democratization. In his eyes, the former required a stronger bargaining position and he was convinced that the relatively small and vulnerable eastern European states could not hope to achieve this on their own.⁸⁵ Eörsi thus maintained that regional cooperation was necessary. What he particularly disliked about proclamations on the swift “joining of Europe,” besides their uncritical celebration of the capitalist West, were their attempts to declare the previous forty-five years non-existent.⁸⁶ He agreed that the experiences were mostly bad and almost unbearable. Still he asked whether two generations could really be told that “everything they lived through and did was simply worthless.”⁸⁷

In sum, Eörsi was a leftist thinker who shared part of the liberal agenda due to three main reasons: his markedly dissident attitudes, the fact that he could integrate the newly powerful discourse on human rights into his own leftist discourse, and his experience of the dictatorial nature and fail-

⁸¹ István Eörsi, “A lábtörés jogáért,” *Beszélő* 10 (1990).

⁸² István Eörsi, “Ginsbergnél,” *Beszélő* 7 (1990).

⁸³ István Eörsi, “Időm Gombrowiczsal – Részlet egy készülő könyvből,” *Beszélő* 50-51 (1990).

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*

⁸⁵ István Eörsi, “Egy újfajta félelem bűvöletében,” *Beszélő* 17 (1990).

⁸⁶ István Eörsi, “Határ-esetek,” *Beszélő* 39 (1990).

⁸⁷ Eörsi, “Időm Gombrowiczsal.”

ures of the state socialist system. While on the far left of the liberal spectrum, he seemed to be one of the fiercest critics of continuities with the former regime. In short, he developed his own brand of post-dissident left, liberal anti-communism.

Still, in the longest article he wrote for *Beszélő* on Hungarian politics, he came around to endorse the coalition of MSzP and SzDSz in “the interest of the party and the country.”⁸⁸ In this crucial text, he first declared in his characteristic style, “The parliamentarians of MSzP could field eight football teams full of Kádárist functionaries and I considered it unbearable to belong to an organization that would cooperate with them.”⁸⁹ But such rhetorical bombast merely proved to be the prelude to his unexpected justification of cooperation. He argued that his “sense of reason” won out against his “sentiments.” With whom should SzDSz cooperate, he asked rhetorically, with “members of the Noszty family who have been debauched further into Horthyist illusions? [...] The socialists at least have an ideology that is humanist at its root and pro-modernization.”⁹⁰

Thus, in spite of repeatedly expressing his moral outrage, Eörsi could justify preferring an alliance with the post-communist Left by pointing to existing ideological affinities between them and his own party, which he thought were absent in the case of the Hungarian Right. Ultimately, his moral outrage seemed to be derived from ideological considerations rather than the other way round: the leftist rebel as liberal chose not to rebel against the Left-Liberal coalition.

Miklós Szabó, or Liberalism as Historical-Political Polemic

As an expert on both right-wing radicalism and the history of communism, professional historian Miklós Szabó was in many respects uniquely well-versed among leading post-dissident liberal thinkers to address problems of twentieth-century Hungarian history and publically confront the dual legacy of the country after 1989. Szabó was convinced that only a selective appropriation of cultural and political traditions could support

⁸⁸ István Eörsi, “Pálfordulásom története,” *Beszélő* 23 (1994).

⁸⁹ Ibid.

⁹⁰ Ibid. The Noszty family is a reference to the famed Hungarian novel Kálmán Mikszáth originally published in installments in 1906–1907, Kálmán Mikszáth, *The Noszty boy's affair with Mari Tóth*, trans. Bernard Adams (Budapest: Corvina, 2005). As mentioned above, the name and works of Mikszáth were often evoked in Hungary in the 1990s, typically and controversially to refer to the feudal elements surviving into modern times.

Hungarian democratization: “from the legacies of the past, we merely want to preserve those elements that can be combined with the viewpoint of contemporariness,” he would state.⁹¹ In terms of the dominant way of relating to the past, Szabó perceived the Hungarian situation to be grave indeed: he identified the Kádárist politics of amnesia as the immediate precursor to post-communism and warned that shortly after 1989, Hungary continued to lack a democratically oriented public opinion.⁹² In his eyes, this was manifested in the much-improved public reputation of anti-democratic historical actors such as Miklós Horthy, József Mindszenty, and Pál Teleki.⁹³

Selectivity of appropriation regulated by the normative idea of a democratic political culture in his case did not imply a politically charged selectivity of perception however. For instance, his presentation of József Mindszenty, one of the most controversial actors in twentieth-century Hungarian history, was complex and balanced. Szabó recognized his martyrdom under communism and maintained that Mindszenty took a political stance far superior to Horthy’s in the inter-war years (Mindszenty had legitimist sympathies and condemned the White Terror), but also discussed his anti-democratic and anti-Semitic convictions. Szabó had no interest in constructing a facile teleology of the rise of liberal democracy in the vein of Francis Fukuyama either. His discussion on the German *Kulturkampf* provides an excellent illustration of this, where the “model-like liberal-democratic arrangement between Church and state” was in its own days an “etatist assassination attempt” against social autonomy.⁹⁴

Szabó aimed to influence the Hungarian politics of history and critically impact the remembrance of the twentieth century through a public display of historical expertise, but refrained from viewing historical argu-

⁹¹ Ibid. “We are protecting the cleanness of national culture by strictly rejecting neobaroque kitsch,” he wrote in Miklós Szabó, “Keresztény-nemzeti szabadelvűség?,” *Beszélő* 47 (1991). “Our special Hungarian intonation cannot resemble that of historico-snobbery.” Miklós Szabó, “Az SzDSz Szabadelvű Körének platformja,” *Beszélő* 48 (1991).

⁹² Miklós Szabó, “Zsákutcás magyar történelem és unbewältigte Vergangenheit,” *Beszélő* 26 (1990). He was well aware that this concerned the memory of 1956 too: once he explicitly wrote that “the generations who currently define the face and atmosphere of society have lived through the last decades as if 1956 had never happened.” Miklós Szabó, “A kínos forradalom,” *Beszélő* 42 (1991).

⁹³ Miklós Szabó, “A demokrácia ügye 1956-ban,” *Beszélő* 25 (1991).

⁹⁴ Miklós Szabó, “A német ‘kultúrharc,’” *Beszélő* 22 (1991).

ments as politically decisive.⁹⁵ This set him in opposition to József Antall, the prime minister between 1990 and 1993, who in particular preferred to employ the political language of national history.⁹⁶ Szabó was convinced that only the actual performance of a country could bring it international status, not beliefs about a supposedly glorious past. He was thus especially critical of what he perceived as a Hungarian superiority complex based on nationalistic perspectives on history.⁹⁷

In *Beszélő*, Szabó tackled historical questions at various levels stretching from global affairs to individuals little-known abroad, whose choices and fates offered new insights into larger patterns—or were simply newly politically instrumentalized and therefore of interest. Moreover, he provided overviews of crucial phenomena in other European countries, such as the history of the Iron Guard, the Romanian fascist movement, and the process of *Vergangenheitsbewältigung* in Germany. Perhaps most importantly, he offered complex treatments of major problems in Hungarian history, such as the history of agrarian and Christian politics with a particular interest in the former failures but also the chances of democratization.⁹⁸ Last but not least, Szabó was keenly interested in questions of foreign policy, devoting several articles to clarifying his stance on matters of foreign relations and critiquing Hungarian officialdom.

His scholarly writings were known for their empirical richness as well as interpretative ambitions (or as his critics liked to put it: their speculative elements). His contributions to *Beszélő* were hardly very different. Besides being a widely recognized expert on historical matters, Szabó had a known penchant for politically and ideologically charged polemics and occasional sarcastic outbursts. He was sharply opposed to narratives that maintained that the development of the country until 1945 (or at least 1944) could be

⁹⁵ The way the term remembrance is currently (broadly) understood, even though Szabó did not use the term in the early 1990s.

⁹⁶ On this, see Szűcs, *Az antalli pillanat*.

⁹⁷ Most explicitly in Miklós Szabó, “A Habsburg-Nagy-Magyar birodalom,” *Beszélő* 17 (1992). He evoked concepts such as patronizing (*főlényeskedés*) and the desire to rule (*úrhatnáság*) as particularly conspicuous characteristics of Hungarian attitudes towards other countries of the region. Such expressions (particularly the recurrent use of terms derived from the Hungarian root *úr*, lord) suggested that there was a notable feudal element to the practices of the government.

⁹⁸ For instance, his summary of the German *Kulturkampf* ended with the statement “The most important message of the *Kulturkampf* for our age is that a democratic path of political Catholicism exists.” Szabó, “A német ‘kulturharc,’” See also Miklós Szabó, “...Pilátus a Crédóban,” *Beszélő* 45 (1994). On a similar discussion of Hungarian agrarian politics, see Miklós Szabó, “A Kisgazdapárt útja és tévútja,” *Beszélő* 5 (1993).

considered “normal” and in line with the Western European mainstream.⁹⁹ He claimed to know “Christian Hungary” too well for that.

More generally, he maintained that the development of no place could be depicted as normal where totalitarian movements came to power. He argued that Nazism was indeed a reaction: not to Soviet communism though, as right-wing historians wanted to have it during the German *Historikerstreik* but much rather to the “distorted path” of German modernization.¹⁰⁰ In accordance with this view, Szabó was also discontented with nostalgic evocations of a Central European *belle époque*—a widespread practice among his liberal friends. He reminded his readers that “German political anti-Semitism leading to mass murder developed in this Central European world exactly during the *belle époque*.”¹⁰¹

Szabó also drew some harshly polemical historical analogies. For instance, he would compare the attempt of the Smallholders’ Party (*Kisgazdapárt*) after 1989 to redistribute land in a major operation of “historical justice” to the politics the communists pursued right after the Second World War. Both were supposedly aimed at the “artificial creation” of a sorely lacking social base.¹⁰² Rather infamously, when trying to find a fitting inter-war analogy for the increasingly radical *népi* politician and publicist István Csurka, Szabó ended up suggesting Ferenc Rajniss. This was controversial enough since Rajniss was executed as a war criminal after he had been a member of the Arrow Cross government in the last stages of the Second World War.¹⁰³

⁹⁹ Recalling the time when the Horthy era was still relatively fresh in memory (as in 1956), Szabó maintained that considering it Western would have been contrary to public opinion at the time. He partly blamed the new discourse on Central Europe for what he identified as an unjustified change of perspective. Szabó, “1956-ban.” On the emergence of the politically heavily charged idea that some wanted to bring Hungary back to the period before 1945, see Szűcs, *Az antalli pillanat*, 241–243.

¹⁰⁰ Szabó was also known as a theorist of the peculiarities of modern Hungary and modern Hungarian liberalism where, in the absence of modern liberal strata, liberalism had a markedly noble complexion throughout the long 19th century. “When around the turn of the century, modern capitalism emerged in Hungary, the rise of Hungarian bourgeois liberalism did not accompany it,” he maintained in *Beszélő*. Miklós Szabó, “A gödöllői gondolat,” *Beszélő* 27 (1991). See also Miklós Szabó, “The Liberalism of the Hungarian Nobility (1825–1910)” in *Liberty and the Search for Identity. Liberal Nationalisms and the Legacy of Empires*, ed. Iván Zoltán Dénes (Budapest–New York: CEU Press, 2006), 197–237.

¹⁰¹ Szabó, “Zsákutcás magyar.”

¹⁰² Miklós Szabó, “Történelmi helycserés támadás a jogrend ellen,” *Beszélő* 5 (1991).

¹⁰³ Miklós Szabó, “Jobboldal és szélsőjobboldal tegnap és most,” *Beszélő* 42 (1992). The conclusion explained that, even though the political situations of the 1930s and the 1990s were comparable due to the “dualistic style” of the right-wing mainstream, “the Hungarian Republic is not the Horthy regime, even if it frequently looked like it.”

Szabó's rejection of right-wing traditions, attacks on nationalism, and critique of the historical trajectory of the country were never part of some more general refusal to identify with the local political community. To the contrary, Szabó frequently emphasized his dedication to democratic and plebeian forms of Hungarian patriotism. He once defined his position thus: "The author of these lines is ready to reconcile with 'cultural nationalism' (though it is contrary to his taste) but cannot make peace with 'the descendants of the fallen regime.'"¹⁰⁴ Szabó was strongly dedicated to the political ethos and (what he believed to be) the dominant platform of the Hungarian Revolution of 1956, namely the unity of democracy and independence. In his view, these two central values also characterized the revolutionary episode of 15 March 1848, which made him argue in favor of its anniversary becoming the main national holiday.¹⁰⁵

Szabó explicitly identified two strategic possibilities for Hungarian liberals that were admittedly never well articulated and properly debated. They could choose between opposing "the successors of the defeated communist system" (*a megvert kommunista rendszer utódai*) or confronting the authoritarian ambitions of the MDF and its government.¹⁰⁶ Szabó strongly pleaded for the latter, arguing that SzDSz remained anti-communist but this should not be confused with "the anti-communism of certain circles in Hungary" which "could *cum grano salis* be summarized as follows: for fifty years some Jewish-proletarian gang unrightfully occupied the positions of power, but in Hungary of 1100 years, the right to rule evidently belongs to Hungarian gentlemen."¹⁰⁷ He believed that this form of anti-communism constituted the graver threat to democracy.

In my assessment, Szabó managed to be an unequivocal critic of mainstream traditions on the Hungarian Right without thereby trivializing the experience and consequences of communism (to use part of the German Faulenbach-formula).¹⁰⁸ He was committed to uncovering the stories of the "Caraffas, Haynaus and Prónays" of 1956 in *Beszélő*, sometimes using

¹⁰⁴ Miklós Szabó, "Mindszenty és Barankovics," *Beszélő* 20 (1991).

¹⁰⁵ Miklós Szabó, "Ünnep és ünnep—Szabó Miklós hozzászólása a Magyar Köztársaság állami ünnepéről szóló törvényjavaslat általános vitájához," *Beszélő* 11 (1991). He observed that subsequent authoritarian regimes were unable to appropriate its memory.

¹⁰⁶ Miklós Szabó, "Az SzDSz Szabadelvű Körének platformja," *Beszélő* 48 (1991).

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁸ See Bernd Faulenbach, "Problem des Umgangs mit der Vergangenheit im vereinten Deutschland: Zur Gegenwartsbedeutung der jüngsten Geschichte" in *Deutschland: Eine Nation – doppelte Geschichte. Materialien zum deutschen Selbstverständnis*, ed. Werner Weidenfeld (Köln: Wiss. und Pol., 1995), 175–190.

(for lack of more reliable sources) gossip at his disposal.¹⁰⁹ He also kept exposing how post-communists in MSzP failed to identify the responsibility of János Kádár for the consolidation of the communist regime after 1956. Szabó thought that post-communists were ready to discuss only the insufficient extent of economic reforms while Kádárism restored an unreformable system and solidified “the Hungarian road to slump” (*a pangás magyar útja*).¹¹⁰

As mentioned above, beyond trying to impact the politics of history, Szabó also devoted his attention to questions of foreign policy in particular. In December 1989, he published an article with the title “Nincsen többé geopolitikai helyzet” (The geopolitical situation is no more)—a joyful announcement of the passing of the communist era as well as a sarcastic reference to the apologetic use made of the expression “geopolitical situation” during it. In this article, Szabó expressed his hope invested in a new global arrangement and the democratization of the Soviet empire. He maintained that the Warsaw Pact, which was never more than a quasi-alliance dominated by the Soviet Union anyway, could be dissolved and NATO preserved without significant changes in the balance of power in Europe.¹¹¹ The chance to become independent and neutral would thus emerge for countries of the East Central European region. The West and the Soviet Union could then solidify their new relations by signing bilateral agreements of non-aggression with each other.¹¹²

The major foreign political concern of Szabó before the drastic worsening of the Yugoslav situation was, and he was hardly alone in this, the tense relations between Romania and Hungary. His stance was that the large numbers of Hungarians living in Romania could not be assimilated and therefore a compromise was necessary between the two sides. He argued that “autonomy” (the specifics of which he did not attempt to define) would prove the best solution.¹¹³ Szabó thus wanted to appear both reconciliatory and firm with regard to relations to Romania.

His other recommendations about Hungarian and international foreign policy were also neither overly moralistic, nor dovish. Probably partly in

¹⁰⁹ Miklós Szabó, “Gyurkó Lajos—Adalékok egy ellenforradalmár pályaképehez,” *Beszélő* 8 (1994).

¹¹⁰ Miklós Szabó, “Az MSzP megtalálta a felelősöket,” *Beszélő* 2 (1991).

¹¹¹ He articulated very similar notions in early 1990 in his Miklós Szabó, “Improvizáció—a NATO-tag Magyarországról,” *Beszélő* 8 (1990).

¹¹² *Ibid.*

¹¹³ Miklós Szabó, “Néhány figyelmeztető szó a román nacionalizmusról,” *Beszélő* 12 (1990).

order to counter the power of moralizing discourse in post-dissident circles, Szabó formulated the realist option and explained that “a small and poor country” like Hungary could not afford subordinating its foreign and trade policy to “ideological” considerations.¹¹⁴ He was “unequivocally committed to Kuwait” in the Gulf War and desired the military conquest of Iraq and an end to the regime of Saddam Hussein. His arguments about the Gulf War were meant to justify these ambitions to a left-leaning audience, whom he believed suffered too much from a sense of guilt and consequently tended to be too critically disposed towards Western military interventions.¹¹⁵

Seeing that the great powers were, above all, interested in the stability of East Central Europe, Szabó wrote of the benefits of a principled foreign policy line based on a firm commitment to the status quo. He believed that Hungarian diplomacy made a sinful mistake by acting, or at least seeming to act, otherwise. He argued that the mere perception that Hungary might be interested in border revision and could be a regional troublemaker would, contrary to the nominal intentions of the government, harm the Hungarian minorities living in neighboring states. Szabó was ready to admit that this perception was partly based on a suspicious interpretation of governmental acts. Still, his concern that Hungarian minority interest and Hungary’s ambition to be a regional force might easily clash acquired extra support when Hungary decided to favor Croatian independence in spite of a much larger Hungarian minority living in Serbia.¹¹⁶

Gáspár Miklós Tamás, or the Liberal Conservative Revolutionary

“It is most unpleasant for someone pursuing a public argument when his opinion is not radically different from those of his fellow *debateurs*,”¹¹⁷ Gáspár Miklós Tamás remarked in *Beszélő*, and he was clearly committed to avoiding such unpleasant situations.¹¹⁸ Gifted with enormous rhetorical

¹¹⁴ Miklós Szabó, “Egy tilalommal kevesebb, vagy egy elvtelenséggel több,” *Beszélő* 2 (1990).

¹¹⁵ Miklós Szabó, “Mourir pour Kuvait?,” *Beszélő* 5 (1991).

¹¹⁶ Miklós Szabó, “Szakdolgozat a magaslesről,” *Beszélő* 18 (1991). He called this “the gravest foreign policy mistake of the government” also later on. See Szabó, “A Habsburg-Nagy-Magyar birodalom.”

¹¹⁷ Gáspár Miklós Tamás, “Két idegen szó: amnézia és normalitás,” *Beszélő* 37 (1994).

¹¹⁸ He once stated that “the repression of private opinion—may it be strange or eccentric” kills the liberal order based on noble individualism. Gáspár Miklós Tamás, “A’ diétai regulának summás veleje,” *Beszélő* 20 (1991).

talents and ready to combine insights gained from heterogeneous intellectual sources, Tamás turned surprising twists and turns in argumentation into an art of its own. In one characteristic passage he discussed József Antall thus: "Many have complained about the sense of mission that Antall and his political allies possessed even though this was still the best about them. [...] Poor Antall was at least proud to be Prime Minister of the Republic of Hungary (even if this was the only notable component of his politics) and did not realize that people despised him not *in spite of but because of* being the head of government."¹¹⁹

Tamás thought his party would continue to participate in heated debates simply due to its oppositional "urge to think" and the need felt by its members to defend "human dignity" against state actions.¹²⁰ His intention to provoke his readers and make them reconsider philosophical and political questions was coupled with an understanding of politics as a pragmatic and rational venture. While his impulsive, unrelenting and verbose style quickly made him a "symbol of confrontation," he declared that the political community had to function as both moral and interpretative.¹²¹

Tamás maintained that there were "rational criteria to determine what constitutes the right exercise of legitimate authority" and everyone could comprehend them—political rationality and morality could by no means be considered a privilege of intellectuals.¹²² In accordance with his pen-

¹¹⁹ Gáspár Miklós Tamás, "Közjó és államrezon," *Beszélő* 28 (1995). His style was at times very combative. He would write of the "pathetic failure," "general confusion," "total bankruptcy" and "hopeless dilettantism" of the government who do "everything to compromise our country." Gáspár Miklós Tamás, "Csak száz nap a világ—avagy ki tudja, holnap mire ébredünk?," *Beszélő* 36 (1990). At other times his reasoning was more lighthearted. For instance, about the paradoxes of the anti-Semitic mind, he wrote, "Some anti-Semites were truly accused of anti-Semitism but they do not equal Hungary. Some anti-Semites protest against this kind of accusation and they are right in this, but when they say that whoever is Hungarian is not anti-Semite, they (logically speaking) exclude *themselves* from the Hungarian nation. This is an exaggeration. Hungarian anti-Semites are also Hungarian but there are fewer of them than they thought." Gáspár Miklós Tamás, "Hors d'eau—avagy ki vádolja nemzetünket antiszemitizmus-sal?," *Beszélő* 41 (1990).

¹²⁰ Gáspár Miklós Tamás, "A Demokratikus Ellenzéktől a demokratikus ellenzéki," *Beszélő* 20 (1990). He described the behavior of dissidents (largely inherited by SzDSz) thus: "challenging, rebellious, obstinate, individualist, unique-original behavior." *Ibid.* Moreover, he maintained that dissidents disliked philistine boredom, unimaginative, unprincipled as well as doctrinaire politics.

¹²¹ Tamás, "Közjó és államrezon."

¹²² Gáspár Miklós Tamás, "Az értelmiség és a ha-ha-hatalom—Az álprobléma megoldása," *Beszélő* 17 (1995).

chant for subverting clichés, which often took priority over the requirement of consistency in his articles, he quickly added that the influence of intellectuals in Eastern European politics often amounted to a hindrance. Intellectuals in this part of the world tended to be cynics, relativists, or at least skeptics opposed to legitimate authority and the notion of shared political rationality, he would maintain.¹²³

Though he belonged to the same party as the anti-political liberal György Konrád, Tamás was sharply critical of what he saw as the deeply anti-political nature of Eastern European movements after the collapse of the communist regimes. He thought Eastern Europeans searched for freedom in private life and wanted to cherish the nation as part of their cultural identity—freedom and the nation were sought “everywhere but in the political community.”¹²⁴ He believed that this urgently needed to change if local political communities were to revive.

As a liberal, Tamás declared, “We do not only love liberty and human rights because they are useful—even though they indubitably are—but because they are beautiful and good. Liberty is good as such.”¹²⁵ For him, the moot question was how defining democratic political experiences would prove for members of Hungarian society and how solidly and reliably committed to freedom people truly were.¹²⁶ Already before the elections of 1990, Tamás asked why there was so much “anti-democratic

¹²³ It was most probably in this subversive vein that Tamás claimed national sentiments were “too weak.” He argued that active civil patriotism was on the wane, and national (primarily literary) traditions were “shockingly rapidly forgotten.” Gáspár Miklós Tamás, “Az antikommunizmus jövője,” *Beszélő* 27 (1994). Elsewhere he (much more conventionally for a Hungarian liberal of the early 1990s) stressed that “angry nationalism could ruin us all” and “the solidarity of all Eastern European democratic forces was required.” Gáspár Miklós Tamás, “Erdélytől Litvániáig...,” *Beszélő* 12 (1990). An early Hungarian expert on nationalism, he theorized the role of ethnicity: “in Eastern Europe, ethnicity—as opposed to the state—expressed the profound dissatisfaction with legally regulated society, economic limits, bureaucratic elites, the values of conceptual traditions.” Gáspár Miklós Tamás, “Hogyan tévedt el a Nyugat Szerbiában?,” *Beszélő* 1 (1993). Rather curiously, once he claimed that he would welcome “a German imperial role” and “civilizing mission” and that it was a shame that Germany lacked the inner conviction to pursue it. Tamás, “Csak száz nap a világ.” In an important article on Hungarians and Germans, he claimed that the region continued to be prejudiced against the Germans due to having experienced “violent expulsions.” Instead it actually owed them. Gáspár Miklós Tamás, “Magyarok és németek,” *Beszélő* 25 (1990).

¹²⁴ Gáspár Miklós Tamás, “Az SZDSZ becsülete,” *Beszélő* 12 (1995).

¹²⁵ Gáspár Miklós Tamás, “A szocialisták hallgatása,” *Beszélő* 51–52 (1993).

¹²⁶ Gáspár Miklós Tamás, “Bírói jogalkotás és parlamenti mindenhatóság,” *Beszélő* 21 (1991).

prejudice” in Hungary and why the three most important accomplishments of Hungarian democracy, which he identified as the free press, the multi-party system, and the budding market economy, seemed, as he polemically put it, so unpopular. In his view, the nominal advantages Hungary had due to implementing the chief measures of democratic transition ahead of other countries could barely hide severe disadvantages. Above all, there was no democratic mass movement, and thus there was neither a sense of break with the past, nor clear distinctions between true democrats and moderate supporters of dictatorship.¹²⁷ Consequently, Tamás declared himself in favor of a measure of “legal paternalism” that was meant to provide liberal education, even as he continued to emphasize that “democratic experiences and struggles” were irreplaceable.¹²⁸

As a conservative liberal impacted by neo-conservative ideas, Tamás positioned himself on the right among liberals after 1989. This meant that he was keen to emphasize the differences between liberalism and democracy.¹²⁹ “Majority legitimization is more important for democrats, individual freedom for liberals. I am primarily a liberal,” he would declare.¹³⁰ Calling himself a conservative and old Whig liberal, one of those “old reactionary anti-Marxists,”¹³¹ he even committed himself to a critical view of the Enlightenment and especially to what he described as the dominant, “French,” state-interventionist, social democratic ideas of the postwar period.¹³² Tamás would have preferred “individual dignity and individual freedom” instead and was explicitly in favor of “private property, free market, free trade and low taxes,” the necessity of authority, and respect for state institutions.¹³³ He especially warned against what he saw as the emerging opposition between moral sentiments and a sense of justice on the one hand, and sense of business on the other, seeing in the dichotomy the dangerous continuation of Hungarian prejudices from pre-socialist and socialist times.¹³⁴

¹²⁷ Gáspár Miklós Tamás, “Kilátás az országházból,” *Beszélő* 4 (1990).

¹²⁸ Tamás, “Bírói jogalkotás.”

¹²⁹ He made some positive references to the “neoconservative revolution” too as in Tamás, “Bírói jogalkotás.”

¹³⁰ Gáspár Miklós Tamás, “Van kiút?,” *Beszélő* 50–51 (1990). He even argued that in terms of the results it was all the same whether liberty was restricted by a despotic state or by public opinion.

¹³¹ *Ibid.*

¹³² Tamás, “Antikommunizmus jövője.”

¹³³ Tamás, “Demokratikus Ellenzéktől.” He also spoke out in favor of anti-inflationary and privatization policies.

¹³⁴ Gáspár Miklós Tamás, “Privatizálunk? – Nem, államosítunk!,” *Beszélő* 21 (1990).

Occasionally Tamás would go as far as to argue (in the manner of Jacob Talmon) that democracy and totalitarianism had common roots.¹³⁵ When he predicted the emergence of a social-liberal coalition in late 1993, he claimed that “socialism and liberalism were irreconcilable”¹³⁶ since “egalitarian democratism” and “liberalism dedicated to spontaneity and individuality” had to be opposed to each other.¹³⁷ At this time, he presented socialism as “a modern revolt against modernity, part of the disharmonious and tragic story of modernity,”¹³⁸ while also noting that there was “a frightening intellectual vacuum on the institutional Left” in post-communist Hungary.¹³⁹

Tamás was undoubtedly a complex and in many ways heterodox thinker. His idea for SzDSz was to be “a network of unruly and obstinate *ecclesia* made up of self-conscious individuals, stubborn autonomies, passionate love, and true traditions.”¹⁴⁰ He nevertheless considered SzDSz as the “*polgári* middle,” viewing it as a party that was both sober and resolute, a party that appreciated “work, expertise, intelligence, imagination, and inventive patriotism” and that found its social base in the “new pro-market middle classes.”¹⁴¹

In early 1990, G.M. Tamás spoke of “the threat of fascism, chauvinism, xenophobia, anti-Semitism, and the dominance of the extreme right” as merely a cheap tool of “Bolshevik propaganda.”¹⁴² Soon afterwards, though, he proposed a similarly radical dichotomy. In an extreme example of politicizing recent history, Tamás saw a direct connection between

¹³⁵ More concretely, he claimed that the difference between the narodnik-communist idea of “people’s democracy” and the radical democratic, urbanist, social democratic, bibóist-jásziist idea was “minimal.” Both were based on the “substantive-homogenous” concept of “the people” and thus excluded the possibility of deliberative, liberal parliamentarianism. Tamás, “Antikommunizmus jövője.”

¹³⁶ Tamás, “A szocialisták hallgatása.” At the same time, he maintained that no more severe attacks against liberal constitutionalism would come from MSZP than from MDF.

¹³⁷ Ibid.

¹³⁸ Ibid.

¹³⁹ Ibid.

¹⁴⁰ Gáspár Miklós Tamás, “Weimar!,” *Beszélő* 5 (1990). As he expressed in *Beszélő*, in the elections of 1990 he counted on the votes of “rebellious” Hungarians, the “European majority” who have been “without voice and representation since the First World War.” The political tradition he positively evoked in particular was that of the nineteenth century, the “century of Széchenyi, Kossuth, Deák.” Gáspár Miklós Tamás, “Új reformkor vagy új Horthy-korszak?,” *Beszélő* 11 (1990).

¹⁴¹ Tamás, “Van kiút?,”. See also his “Weimar!”.

¹⁴² Gásoár Miklós Tamás, “Isten Önökkel!,” *Beszélő* 9 (1990).

rejection of “the twentieth century of Auschwitz, Recsk, Kolima and the Danube-Black Sea Canal” and voting for SzDSz.¹⁴³ He explicitly declared that “if SzDSz failed to win the elections, no legally functioning opposition and thus no democratic government could be expected.”¹⁴⁴ He offered the “choice” between “Western Christian civilization” and its endpoint in liberal democracy and the “Eastern tradition” and what was supposed to be its product: the Leninist state.

In addition to such sharp dichotomies that did not fail to provoke angry reactions, Tamás also offered the most markedly pro-SzDSz interpretation of 1989 among the authors analyzed in this paper. Unsurprisingly for once, he claimed that the history of the democratic opposition was the most significant chapter in the history of anticommunism,¹⁴⁵ and “if there was no SzDSz, reform communist Imre Pozsgay would be the President of the Republic and MDF—in accordance with its original intention—would be governing in coalition with MSzP.”¹⁴⁶

The strong hopes Tamás put in the revival of the Hungarian political community was to drastically weaken after some years. In the early 1990s, he wrote of 1988–1989 as the liberal break with “the third way,” and saw in it an anti-utopian and anti-revolutionary, indeed idea-less, turn. By late 1993, he diagnosed the liberal-conservative revolution, which in his eyes reached its peak with the revolutions in Eastern Europe, to be over.¹⁴⁷ His confidence on the wane, he seemed increasingly resigned, writing down sentences such as “the warming up of the classical liberal tradition—which I still pursue out of a sense of obligation but with ever less hope—

¹⁴³ Ibid.

¹⁴⁴ Tamás, “Új reformkor vagy.”

¹⁴⁵ Tamás, “Antikommunizmus jövője.” The strongest political element of dissident thought was the moral critique of Bolshevik dictatorship. He called dissident ideas strikingly similar to those of the stoics: freedom is an inner, private matter, coherent systems of thought are evil, and anarchy is the ideal to strive for.

¹⁴⁶ Gáspár Miklós Tamás, “A Tölgyessy utca,” *Beszélő* 42 (1990).

¹⁴⁷ Ibid. He now theorized that the anti-revolutionary turns of 1989 “necessarily led to the cult of ‘pragmatism’ and ‘cautious advancement,’ to the admiration of what already exists.” Tamás, “Az SzDSz becsléte.” The coalition between MSzP and SzDSz, between former persecutors and persecuted, only completed the “work of national reconciliation.” His explanation for this development was that the whole political system was re-configured once a truly revolutionary force (namely the extreme right) emerged. He insightfully argued that, as a consequence of the rise of the extreme right, the supporters of continuity and break (MDF and SzDSz, above all) switched positions. However, he still believed that the fate of Hungarian liberalism should not be confused with the career of the coalition.

was simply not powerful enough.”¹⁴⁸ Tamás even started to forecast the end of the liberal order: “The liberal world order does not ask anything from its citizens, merely that they should pay attention to their own interests, including their freedom. This shall be the source of its downfall.”¹⁴⁹

In spite of predicting the end of liberalism, Tamás continued to picture the West in a positive light. What changed was that by 1994 he maintained that “Westerners” were in a minority among Hungarians.¹⁵⁰ He would now argue that no new political community emerged: the foundational values of the new, nominally liberal democratic system were not recognized widely enough. He admitted that there were some historical self-justifications left, but the values embodied by the new regime were not considered “relevant or our own, but merely the product of adaptation.”¹⁵¹ He believed that Hungarian voters continued to prefer moderation and, in line with their moderate anti-capitalism, third-way political ideas.¹⁵² He went on to declare that “the balance of the change of system” was “negative” and Hungarian democracy was “bankrupt.”¹⁵³ A year later he even declared that “everyone knows the change of system failed.”¹⁵⁴

To summarize, after 1989 Gáspár Miklós Tamás quickly established himself as one of the leading politically engaged intellectuals. He was a highly original and subversive thinker, expressing many profound and some extremely simplistic ideas: an ideal combination if a *debateur* aims to be much discussed while being admired and resented in nearly equal measure. Tamás not only avidly followed political developments and reacted to them at times somewhat impulsively but was also quick to draw radical conclusions. Initially being one of the most articulate supporters of the political transformation, he thus ended up as one of the first leading intellectuals to diagnose its failure. While other Eastern European intellectuals could not have cared less about Marxism during the early years after communism, his intellectual trajectory soon led to an engagement with the thought of Karl Marx and leftist currents of anti- and later alter-globalization. In spite of such a drastic change of viewpoint, it thus appears that Tamás continues to

¹⁴⁸ Tamás, “antikommunizmus jövője.”

¹⁴⁹ Tamás, “Közjó és államrezon.”

¹⁵⁰ Ibid. He even wrote of the region “wavering between mixed, dependent, unconscious semi-colonial reminiscences.” Tamás, “Két idegen szó.”

¹⁵¹ Tamás, “Közjó és államrezon.”

¹⁵² Tamás, “Antikommunizmus jövője.”

¹⁵³ Ibid.

¹⁵⁴ Tamás, “Közjó és államrezon.” This also made him critically reassess his own political situation: “We can start again and there is no more of us than back in 1985.”

find it most unpleasant to pursue a public argument when his opinion is not radically different from those of his fellow *debateurs*.

Five Faces of Post-Dissident Hungarian Liberalism

Based on the representative sample analyzed above, I would argue that the central concepts of Hungarian post-dissident liberalism were liberal minimum and threats as we saw in the case of Kis; democratic traditions and progressive patriotism as for Szabó; the liberal-conservative revolution, rational public debates, and the new political community for Tamás; stylistic liberality, anti-political attitudes and intellectual expertise for Konrád; and last but not least, the complete catalogue of human rights as a crucial part of post-dissident left-leaning liberalism as for Eörsi. These five faces of post-dissident liberalism may thus be called the liberalism of threats, liberalism as a historical-political polemic, liberalism as support for the liberal conservative revolution, anti-politics as liberal politics, and liberalism as a form of post-dissident ideological rebellion.

All these Hungarian liberal discourses were clearly embedded in transnational discursive spaces. The contemporary intellectual inspirations of these authors were truly heterogeneous. Proposing state neutrality had much to do with János Kis's intimate familiarity with the works of contemporary American political philosophers such as John Rawls or Ronald Dworkin. István Eörsi spent much of his time in Berlin after 1989 and his critique of post-communism visibly owed to German leftist critiques of the ongoing global transformation. Similarly, Gáspár Miklós Tamás's integration of neo-conservative ideas was in all likelihood directly related to the fact that he spent several years in England in the 1980s where he was extensively exposed to local political and intellectual discussions. While the post-dissident liberal spectrum was thus broad and incorporated many diverse influences, arguably all these forms might be subsumed under the concept of liberal democracy, with the exception of Tamás's whose more neo-conservatively oriented liberalism tended to perceive an opposition between liberalism and democracy.

At the same time, my findings clearly show that the majority of post-dissident concepts of liberal democracy in Hungary had stronger affinities with the Left than the Right. Post-dissident liberals extensively dealt with themes such as democratic traditions, the progressive nature of liberalism in a post-communist environment, and inquired into questions of human rights and welfare, even if there was a crucial parallel liberal discussion

on the overly extended nature of the welfare state. On the other hand, Hungarian post-dissident liberals often articulated their rejection of collectivism, particularly of nationalism. Such a fearful rejection might be seen as one of the main lessons they drew from the experiences of the twentieth century.

Distrust is also related with what I see as the major ambiguity, and ultimately the major source of weakness, of post-dissident Hungarian liberalism. While the aim of post-dissident liberals was to position liberalism in the center, already in the earliest years after 1989 they tended to perceive Hungarian political life as dominated by illiberal forces—when their major political opponents were rather eager to affiliate with significant parts of the liberal agenda. As I tried to show in the case of János Kis, the liberal consensus was formulated in a polemical style rather than in a calm and confident manner. This eminent politicization of what was supposed to be the liberal democratic consensus arguably was directly responsible for making liberalism an object of disagreement. It might thus have contributed to the gradual decline of political liberalism once its moment of intellectual dominance, described above, passed.

“Totalitarianism” and the Limits of Polish Dissident Political Thought

Late Socialism and After

PIOTR WCIŚLIK

Totalitarianism has been one of the most contested concepts in the intellectual history of postwar political thought.¹ One of the topical areas of this debate concerned the use of the term by Eastern and Central European dissidents, which was notable given that the proliferation of the concept east of the Iron Curtain in the 1970s coincided with its dismissal by a considerable number of Western sovietologists and policymakers. In the controversy over the dissident usage of the concept, Martin Malia,² the eminent voice of the supporters of the totalitarian framework, believed that the Eastern and Central European usage of “totalitarianism” justified the general validity of the idea.

East Europeans appropriated the cast-off Western concept of totalitarianism to designate just such a total system. For them, “totalitarian” did not mean that such regimes in fact exercised total control over the population (since this is impossible); instead, it meant that such control was their basic aspiration. It did not mean that such regimes were omnipotent in performance, but rather that they were omni-competent in their institutional structure. In short, it was not Soviet society that was totalitarian; rather it was the Soviet state.³ Conversely, the Sovietologist that called totalitarianism by its real name was doing what the dissidents themselves were doing, namely, “refusing to live according to the lie.”

¹ For a now classic overview, see A. Gleason, *Totalitarianism: The Inner History of the Cold War* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995); The most challenging new revision of the totalitarian experience and its effect on political thought is D. Roberts, *The Totalitarian Experiment in Twentieth-Century Europe: Understanding the Poverty of Great Politics* (New York: Routledge, 2006).

² M. Malia, *The Soviet Tragedy: A History of Socialism in Russia, 1917–1991* (New York: Free Press, 1994).

³ *Ibid.*, 14.

By contrast, Andrzej Walicki,⁴ the most consistent critic of the dissident usage, argued that while totalitarianism had considerable validity for the Stalinist period, its mechanical deployment on the late-communist realities was malicious in a double, knowledge-political sense: first, it distorted the proper understanding of the processes of de-totalitarianization, and, second, used as a strategic tool to demonize the system, it blocked the alternative possibilities of positive political change from within. The dissidents, in Walicki's view, were self-gratifying in giving the impression that they were slayers of the totalitarian dragon, whereas in reality, they were a product of a certain historical stage of the regime's internal political dynamic.⁵ But they were also a "product" in the sense that their dogmatic political thinking was deeply affected by the circumstances of their political socialization.

But what if the dissidents' own intention was to re-appropriate the concept in a way that would encompass its historical entanglements, both continuities and ruptures specific to the late-socialist societies? That seemed to be the premise of Jacques Rupnik's argument that the "re-discovery of the concept (and realities) of totalitarianism was by no means a return to the American political science of the 1950s. It was a completely new attempt to redefine the concept in the light of the system's evolution and the new methods of communist rule."⁶ For both Walicki and Malia, the most important component of totalitarianism was the ideology. In the classic model, the Soviet experiment was driven by a utopia of the total regeneration of mankind: the creation of a new world and a new man through political means. Depending on their views about the character and function of the official ideology in the late-socialist period, they assessed the dissident use of the concept differently. By contrast, Rupnik convincingly demonstrated that what the Eastern and Central European oppositionist thinkers meant by totalitarian features of the official ideology was something quite different from the classic concept. Late socialism had less in common with the Orwellian Big Brother and far more with jamming apparatus. What made the

⁴ A. Walicki, "Notes from Jaruzelski's Poland" in *Crisis and Reform in Eastern Europe* (New Brunswick: Transaction Publishers, 1991), ed. F. Fehér and A. Arato; Idem, "From Stalinism to Post-communist Pluralism: The Case of Poland," *New Left Review* 185, 1 (1991): 93-121; Idem, "Totalitarianism and Detotalitarianization: The Case of Poland," *The Review of Politics* 58, 3 (1996): 505-529.

⁵ Walicki, "From Stalinism to Post-communist Pluralism," 100-103.

⁶ J. Rupnik, "Totalitarianism Revisited" in *Civil Society and the State: New European Perspectives* (London: Verso, 1988), ed. J. Keane, 267.

official doctrine totalitarian, according to Havel or Kołakowski, was not so much the ability to impose itself on the individual minds, but rather the fact that it systematically distorted public speech, and hence the possibility of any rational politics as such. Notably, under such assumptions there was no contradiction between the totalitarian character of the official discourse and its ideological entropy, since this character was no longer predicated upon as a demand for conversion.⁷

What applies to the conceptual link between totalitarianism and ideology also applies to the more general issue of the character of the late-socialist regimes. In this regard, for both Malia and Walicki the question was whether lesser intensity of its constitutive features (especially the terror and the ideological pressure) translated, in the last analysis, into a new quality. By contrast, Rupnik correctly noted that the dissidents' own argument differed substantially in the way they posed the question. Rather than presenting a quantity-to-quality-change argument, they debated the regimes' reformability. Havel's formula of post-totalitarianism or Michnik's "toothless totalitarianism" posited the existence of an unredeemable totalitarian core, but that did not preclude the possibility of any transformation, skeptical as both were about consolidated, institutionalized change.⁸

It is the general theme of this essay—based mostly on the Polish case and for reasons of space rarely venturing beyond the canonical *oeuvre*—that the dissident discussion on totalitarianism is a discussion about the boundaries of the political, about the limits of what is possible in politics under (post) totalitarian conditions. However, I suggest that the problem of the boundaries of the political in this context does not end, but only begins with probing the space for independent politics opened by the regime's internal evolution. Neither does the history of this debate end with the collapse of the Communist bloc in 1989.

The major political question for the dissidents was whether politics were possible under totalitarian conditions. This was only partially a matter of diagnosis about the system being surmounted by its own contradictions and, hence, about the possibilities provided by the increasingly patent cracks in the hitherto monolithic structure of command. The strategy of the democratic opposition was not over-determined by that diagnosis, but involved much broader considerations about the problem of totalitarianism as the political evil of their times. The question involved not only

⁷ "Totalitarianism Revisited," 268–271.

⁸ "Totalitarianism Revisited," 267.

determining the kind of politics most effective in fighting communism, but primarily what kind of politics constitutes the opposite of communist politics. In part, this meant a formula of political action radically opposed to that of the party of a new type. What we understand by “anti-politics” was just such a formula, however the concept was much less unequivocal than we tend to think in retrospect.

More importantly, this essay aims to map the semantic field of the dissident concept of totalitarianism in a nuanced way, suggesting that the political evil of their times resided not only in the regime and its actions, but also encompassed two more realms of totalitarianism: that of the “captive mentality” of the population and that of the “totalitarian temptation” pertinent to the anti-communist rebels themselves. The semantics of totalitarianism provided for a conceptual, and yet very real, boundary in thinking about what is politically possible and desirable.

Finally, this essay demonstrates that the concept of totalitarianism and its regulative function did not become buried under the rubble of the system it had designated. Far from that, it acquired a remarkable afterlife in the period of transition. While the scholarly and public debate on coming to terms with the totalitarian past has been overshadowed by topical areas of lustration and nomenclature privatization,⁹ the understanding of the post-history of “captive mentality” and “totalitarian temptation” remains at best fragmentary. Yet they were instrumental in framing discussions about such topics as the *homo sovieticus* mentality or the populist challenge, which in turn had an impact on policy-making in capitalist restructuring, constitutionalism, and party formation.

Politics Under “Totalitarian” Conditions

How is any political opposition possible under totalitarian conditions? If the regime’s totalitarian core is beyond redemption, why engage in dissident activity? According to the most often evoked dissident diagnosis, the regime, totalitarian in aspiration, was nevertheless surmounted by internal contradictions. Unlike Marxism, the post-revisionist concept of the totalitarian contradiction was non-deterministic. The contradiction did not guarantee that the regime would collapse. It only opened the possibility of a space for more freedom, a space which was up to citizens acting to-

⁹ See especially P. Śpiewak, *Pamięć po komunizmie* (Gdańsk: Słowo/Obraz Terytoria, 2005).

gether to fill, circumstances permitting.¹⁰ This is why, the regime’s unreformability (the lack of internal mechanisms of change), did not preclude susceptibility to pressure, be it domestic—coming from social movements organized independently of the state—or international. This point was elaborated most successfully in Michnik’s *New Evolutionism*.¹¹ According to Michnik, given the nature of the regime, it was futile to expect that substantial transformation would come from above under the spell of the advisers to the communist “prince.” That did not preclude, however, a negotiated evolution, but only from a position of strong and organized citizenship. In short, do not settle for guarantees offered by the regime, turn to society. A powerful and independent social movement is how you secure your rights.

The strategy of a new evolutionism gained wide currency both within the transnational community of Eastern and Central European dissenters and among interested observers. It became canonized as a paradigmatic blueprint of the dissident anti-politics.¹² In theory, the idea that the totalitarian state would be rolled back by the forces of civil society sounded exciting in the East as well as in the West, since it overlapped with some ideas developed by the post-1968 radical democratic thought.¹³ However, in Poland, where it was actually tested, it worked much more ambiguously on the ground.

¹⁰ Incidentally, the political analysis centered on the category of “contradiction” was a great and unrecognized debt to Marxist thought, which survived the demise of Marxist revisionism. Conviction about the contradictions of totalitarianism was the key element in dissident political strategy in Poland, as presented in Kołakowski’s *Theses on Hope and Hopelessness*. According to Kołakowski, these contradictions included: the need for stability and inability to institutionalize societal pluralism; the need for internal reform of the communist movement and inability to abandon the rigidities of Leninism; the need for economic and technological progress and the impossibility of allowing the necessary professional and creative autonomy etc. L. Kołakowski, “Theses on Hope and Hopelessness,” *Survey* 17, 3 (1971): 37–52.

¹¹ A. Michnik, *Letters from Prison and Other Essays* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987), 135–148.

¹² See also A. Renwick “Anti-Political or Just Anti-Communist? Varieties of Dissidence in East-Central Europe and Their Implications for the development of Political Society,” *East European Politics and Societies* 20, 2 (2006): 286–318; R. Brier, “Adam Michnik’s Understanding of Totalitarianism and the West European Left: A Historical and Transnational Approach to Dissident Political Thought,” *East European Politics and Societies* 25, 2 (2011): 197–218.

¹³ J. L. Cohen and A. Arato, *Civil Society and Political Theory* (Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press, 1992).

This ambiguity can be defined as a gap between the ethics and pragmatics of political involvement, between value commitments and the adversarial circumstances under which these values were to be realized. Despite some non-negligible differences, among the democratic opposition there existed a basic consensus regarding the value of basic human rights, national sovereignty, and political autonomy in the form of law-abiding representative democracy.¹⁴ The real problem was how to realize them in a totalitarian state. Pressure, including social pressure, always creates a joining point between the pressing and the pressed. And, in practice, at the joint it was hard to distinguish between the action establishing some working compromise and the giving up of the movement's independence, between realizing and giving up values; in short, between autonomous cooperation and collaboration.

The quandary of anti-politics involved especially the practical question of whether to act only from the independent civic movement, or through, and thus cooperating with, the institutions of the state. The solutions oscillated between two poles. The first solution (dominant in the later interpretations) aimed at creating what was best defined by Václav Benda as "parallel polis," that is a network of institutions fully independent of the state in which free thought would reign, an uncompromisingly good life would be livable and fundamental values preserved.¹⁵

The second solution, in Poland advocated especially by Jacek Kuroń, went further in that it took the task of independent community-building only as a first step. The second step was to penetrate the existing official institutions—most importantly workers' councils and local governments—in order to infuse from without a fresh democratic spirit.

Contrary to some interpretations, the dissident "anti-politics" does not necessarily mean rejection of politics as such (or seeing all politics as potentially totalitarian). In Kuroń's case (as in Havel's), it was rather a different concept of the political. Kuroń assumed that the late-socialist power operated not through the atomization of society, but rather through the hypertrophy of a fake associational life. It was not about destroying spontaneous self-organization of the citizens, but rather about creating its

¹⁴ There were major divergences about the formula of patriotism—critical or affirmative—in relation to the past political traditions and their outcomes. Also, even though there was agreement as for Western-type democracy being a necessary framework for political good life, some of the independent thinkers (especially Havel and Kuroń) did not consider it a sufficient one.

¹⁵ V. Benda, "Parallel Polis" in *Civic Freedom in Central Europe: Voices from Czechoslovakia*, ed. H. G. Skilling and P. Wilson (London: Macmillan, 1991), 35–41.

official, subjugated doubles. Here, rather than the Gulag, the metaphor defining the relations between the state and the citizens was a playground in which the authorities painted perfectly rectangular squares for playing hop-scotch. "Children do not play nationalized games;"¹⁶ the subjugated social spontaneity called for instinctive social resistance. Acting within the official organizations could bring tangible but limited improvements. However, since the conflict between the citizens' aspirations towards autonomy and the political status quo was, sooner or later, unavoidable, this "internal" opposition was possible only when supported by citizens' self-defense organizations, such as Workers' Defense Committee (*Komitet Obrony Robotników*, KOR), working independently of the authorities. Kuroń's concept of the political did not quite advance the liberal ideas of limited government and strong division of public and private, but rather communitarian notions of deliberation, participation, and civic virtue. It did criticize irresponsible and arbitrary power, but it did not claim that all power is arbitrary and responsible unless restrained. Otherwise it viewed power as a collective action towards ends that cannot be achieved by individuals alone rather than something that principally serves to do harm. Moreover, Kuroń, whose normative understanding of democracy as a sort of cooperation in which the realm of decision making is not isolated from the realm of execution, saw a point in common between representative democracy and authoritarianism precisely in the divorce of the two spheres, even if representative democracy secured more private freedom.¹⁷ Admittedly, the closest approximation of "liberal" anti-politics can be traced to the term's author, György Konrád.¹⁸

The dissident strategy constantly wavered between the two variants of anti-politics. They were similar in what they rejected: the view that politics is a circumscribed domain reserved for a power elite disconnected from citizenship, a realm of instrumental rationality divorced from ethics. They differed in their judgment toward the possibility of realizing a different form of politics under totalitarian circumstances. Even though, as argued here, the liberal variant eventually came to define the political language of the "powerless in power," it was neither a necessary nor logical outcome. As we shall see, the more communitarian vision of anti-politics constituted what in the early days of transition seemed to be an alternative path.

¹⁶ Kuroń, "Notatki o samorządzie" in *Opozycja...*, 96.

¹⁷ See especially Kuroń, "Zasady ideowe" in *Opozycja...*, 108–139.

¹⁸ See his *Antipolitics: An Essay* (San Diego: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1984).

Captive Mentalities and Totalitarian Temptations

While debating totalitarianism was to a large degree a matter of the character and scope of political action possible and desirable under late-socialist conditions, the dissidents' semantic use of the concept was actually broader, encompassing two more realms of totalitarianism: the captive mentality of the governed and the totalitarian temptation pertinent to the dissidents themselves. Both further defined the limits of the political.

Rupnik commented only in passing on Aleksandr Zinovyev's novel *Homo Sovieticus* (1982),¹⁹ a title referring to the Soviet attempt to create a new man. The actually existing Soviet man was a living mockery of communist ambitions; he lacked the ethics of labor and individual responsibility, treated communal property as no-man's land, and was passive and obedient. Rupnik assumed that if the Russian dissidents spoke about *homo sovieticus* and not about independent society, culture, and economy, it reflected the particular Soviet realities, in contrast to Central Europe.²⁰ Although this was largely a correct assertion, the ways of talking about the social under late socialism were far from mutually exclusive. We must recall that even in Central Europe the process of civic emancipation was not a continuous and cumulative process, but rather a road full of holes, dead ends, and false signs. This is why Central European independent thinkers also ventured into Zinovyev's realm.

The strands of political thought I want to bring together under the category of "captive mentality"²¹ should be understood not so much an alternative to the other key concept of dissident political language, namely the civil society, but rather its shady reverse. In other words, it is the opposition thinkers' answer to the question of why people do not rebel against communism (even if they no longer support it) and instead join the dissi-

¹⁹ A. Zinoviev, *Homo Sovieticus* (Boston: Atlantic Monthly Press, 1982).

²⁰ "Totalitarianism Revisited," 274.

²¹ The term bears only partial family resemblance to Miłosz's *The Captive Mind* (1953). The essay, published around the time of Stalin's death, in principle, responded to the question of why intellectuals supported the New Faith. The consent Miłosz had in mind was what he called a "Hegelian bite," the identification of the actions of the Communist state and the logic of History itself. He also spoke of "ketman," a more modest form of consent, combining inward opposition with outward profession of loyalty. Under late socialism the "Hegelian bite" ceased to be a meaningful concept. The question of the official ideology remained important, but nobody took Soviet-type states seriously to be an embodiment of the logic of History, nor was it any longer assumed that Marxism-Leninism was a commentary on it. What the independent thinkers were really after was the conformism and public hypocrisy, corresponding to Miłosz's "ketman."

dent movement. To the extent that their political identity was constructed in opposition not only to the regime, but also to the civic passivity, the captive mentality was, for those “thinking otherwise,” a constitutive other.

The theme of captive mentality emerges at the crossroads of dissident diagnoses about the impact of socialism on morality, memory, and political culture, with individual emphases on each of the three realms. Perhaps the most common, but also most banal, was the sphere of morality. Typically, the critique would consist of a connection between the socialist *paideia* and an inability to commit to fundamental values of truth, freedom, and dignity. Secondly, the dissidents were troubled by the effect of late socialism on political culture. Here, the most common object of their criticism was the so called “unwritten social contract,” a tacit agreement between the communist rulers and their subjects whereby the former would promise a reasonable dose of existential security and welfare in exchange for the latter’s waiving of their civic freedoms. However, especially in pre-Solidarity Poland, the problem with captive mentality was not only civic passivity, but also the anomic instances of anti-communist rebellion. Finally, these two realms would be sometimes connected to the problem of memory and amnesia. A good example is the Czechoslovak opposition’s debate on the “Czech-German Question,” referring to the moral impact on the Czech political psyche of the expulsion of the Sudeten Germans and the consent to the Beneš Decrees.²² In what has become one of the biggest controversies in Czech historiography and public discussion of the recent past (opened to the official realm after 1989), some critical intellectuals argued that the moment when Czechs and Slovaks supported the expulsion of the Sudeten Germans, they became complicit with communist crimes. Moreover, it was to be the source of all later complicity with the regime.²³

²² See H. G. Skilling, *Samizdat and an Independent Society in Central and Eastern Europe* (London: The MacMillan Press, 1989), 99–121; B. F. Abrams, “Morality, Wisdom and Revision: The Czech Opposition in the 1970’s and the Expulsion of the Sudeten Germans,” *East European Politics and Societies* 9, 2 (1995): 234–255; more broadly for the connection of dissident political concepts, international human rights discourse, and opposition’s memory politics see M. Kopeček, “Human Rights Facing a National Past: Dissident ‘Civic Patriotism’ and the Return of History in East Central Europe, 1968–1989,” *Geschichte und Gesellschaft* 38 (2012): 573–602.

²³ Similarly, the Hungarian opposition connected the complete silence about the 1956 Revolution and Goulash Communism. Kadarism, they argued was founded on the taboo of 1956, an act of political amnesia, in which Hungarians surrendered their rights of citizenship for a promise of a decent standard of living. See J. Kis, *Politics in Hungary: For a Democratic Alternative* (Boulder, Colorado: Social Science Monographs, 1989), 23–30.

However, the dissidents' criticism of the effects of late socialism on the social was far from self-gratifying. On the contrary, they were quite reflexive about the ambiguities of their own position. Thus, the third realm of totalitarianism, termed in this essay the "totalitarian temptation," can be read as a reflection on the dissidents' existential circumstance of political and social marginalization and the ways it tainted their political thought and practice. Since their political identity was built on opposition to communism, it should not be surprising that they were obsessed with how not to become new totalitarians. This anti-totalitarian reflexivity was a counterbalance of the criticism of a captive mentality insofar as it served to make it more relative, to remind the dissident thinkers that every form of politically motivated contempt is in the eye of the beholder. While the question of "what went wrong" with socialism was not rare, the dissidents went far beyond the most usual answer, which pointed to Marxism, a totalistic ideology with a political-messianic promise. If it was only through a totalistic ideology that one could become totalitarian, the dissidents (who shared the diagnosis of Leszek Kołakowski—that Marxism, transformed into a state dogma, entered the period of irreversible decline)²⁴ would have had nothing to worry about.

And yet they did. That was because beyond ideology there were the existential conditions from which political questions were addressed and which tainted the political imagination in their own right. Thus, in *Conversation in the Citadel*, Michnik observed that what made one prone to becoming totalitarian was the marginalized condition of the conspirator.²⁵ Conspiracies degenerate into sects. People involved in conspiracy combine blind loyalty and discipline in relation to their fellows and the utterly instrumental approach towards all other individuals. A condition of political and social marginalization involved a dangerous disparity between the conspirators and the common man. That disparity would breed contempt for a slave-like existence with its everyday preoccupations and compromises, and it paved the way towards pedagogical tyranny of the freedom-fighters. Finally, there was a totalitarian potential in opposing some state-ideology wherever one tended to embrace its most consistent and idealized opposite.

How anti-politics responded to the danger of totalitarian temptation was expressed in the formula of the dissident movement that would function openly and have a broad consensual and democratic base. The kind of

²⁴ L. Kołakowski, *Main Currents of Marxism: The Founders, the Golden Age, the Breakdown* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2005).

²⁵ Michnik, *Letters from Prison*, 275–335.

structure that materialized in KOR was grounded on the assumption that the quality of a polity depended on the spirit of its founding and that independence would not be democratic in its political culture unless its foundations had been laid already before the emancipation. The fact that the priority given to participation and deliberation was also a characteristic of Solidarity's self-governing bodies was well reflected in the criticism toward its lengthy procedural decision-making.

Secondly, it was a matter of developing a critical approach toward any ideology, something that did not translate into a position of distance alone. In the case of the dissidents coming from the Left, this critical approach included also a capability of a critical appraisal of other ideologies, assimilating some elements, but rejecting others. The paradigmatic case is Michnik's *The Church and the Left*,²⁶ but less known is his inspiration drawn from a book about the early days of the National Democracy authored by Barbara Toruńczyk, a fellow veteran of March 1968 student protests, who credited the future radical Right (in the 1930s some offshoots of National Democracy even developed into a fascist party) for creating the most successful model of a social movement.²⁷ Also, patriotism and the value of national independence featured prominently in their writings, partially to redeem the cosmopolitan image of the Left. At the same time, given that in the Polish late-socialist context the ideology of the interwar Right was often regarded as the "most consequent opposite" of Marxism, they feared that naïve resurrecting of categories such as "national egoism" could be dangerous. Hence there were frequent polemics with the right-leaning opposition writers who regarded these cautionary calls in appraisal of the interwar conservative thought as a way of deviating attention from the Left's own infamous origins. The supposed residues of their communist genealogies, they argued, made the independent thinkers of the Left more prone to compromise with the communist Leviathan. The evidence of that was the critical approach itself, which reminded them of the communist "salami-tactics" in the realm of political traditions, distinguishing between progressive and reactionary ones.²⁸

The debates about the respective virtues and vices of conspiracy as opposed to openness, underground versus on-the-ground political activities,

²⁶ A. Michnik, *The Church and the Left* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993).

²⁷ B. Toruńczyk, ed., *Narodowa Demokracja: antologia myśli politycznej "Przeglądu Wszechpolskiego" (1895–1905)* (London: Aneks, 1983).

²⁸ I think especially about polemics between members of KOR and members of Ruch Młodej Polski, see Matyja in this volume.

accompanied the Polish independent movement throughout its entire history. However, it became most vividly debated in the middle of the 1980s, in the context of the above-mentioned crisis of the Solidarity movement. One of the reasons brought against the radicals was that prolonged exposure to the underground activities would lead not only to losing touch with the realities defining the life of their constituencies, but towards the development of authoritarian inclinations.

For the sake of a better understanding of the dissident thinking on totalitarianism and its further development (to which I will return below), it is helpful to introduce another group who understood totalitarianism and the limits on politics it imposed quite differently. Thus, it is worth mentioning that Andrzej Walicki's criticism of the concept's dissident usage was not only an expression of his scholarly views, but part and parcel of a broader strand of opinion which, at that time, the eminent historian of ideas fervently shared from a position of a *spectateur engagé*. These were the *new realists*, a semi-formal group of intellectuals which in the late-1980s opted for independence from the mainstream opposition movement spearheaded by Solidarity and claimed to represent what Mirosław Dzielski called "constructive anti-communism"²⁹ combining intellectual independence with a compromise-seeking attitude towards the rulers, as well as a strategy of struggle "not against the State, but for the State."³⁰ In this respect, the new realists identified themselves not only with the earlier neo-positivist politics of the Znak caucus, but also with the conservative Cracow circle of loyalist opposition from the late nineteenth century Habsburg partition of Poland, the Stańczyk group. This new realism had one peculiar trait. As a style of presenting political arguments, realism tends to appeal to experience, rather than ideas. Under late socialism, it was Solidarity-related opposition that was pointing to the record of interactions with the regime to justify its policies. The new realists, by contrast, argued from the height of a political theory—Cold War liberalism of the sort represented by Friedrich Hayek.

Thus, one of the distinctive features of the political language of new realism, a marker of its adherents' political identity, was the distinction between liberalism and democracy, adopted from Hayek and applied to the circumstances of Jaruzelski's Poland. Just as one could imagine a

²⁹ M. Dzielski, "Potrzeba Twórczego Antykomunizmu" in *Odrodzenie ducha – budowa wolności: pisma zebrane* (Cracow: Znak 1995).

³⁰ J. Bartyzel, "Uznać Państwo?," *Polityka Polska*, 9 (1987): 37–40.

liberal regime that was not democratic, one could picture an illiberal democracy. From the two, the former was much more desirable. Conversely, the illiberal democracy was more prone to degenerate into a fully-fledged totalitarianism, if it did not, in fact, represent a latent variety of the latter. This is why “constructive anti-communism” aimed at the liberalization of the party-state, not its democratization. It wanted to limit the scope of its penetration and broaden the sphere of negative liberty—especially in the economic realm—rather than fight for a share in the state power.

Making sense of the connection between illiberal democracy and totalitarianism, Polish Cold War liberals often invoked another crucial concept from Hayek’s political vocabulary, that of “constructivism.”³¹ a belief (pernicious in Hayek’s view) in the primacy of politics rooted in the conviction that humans can rationally master their fate and create a just social order. This stood in contrast to an allegedly natural way of life, in which liberty was founded on the principles of private property, free market economy, and limited government; where natural inequalities were unavoidable, but safe from attempts to remake individuals according to utopian blueprints.

The realists, applying Hayek’s political theory to the local conditions, saw a similarity between the constructivism of high Stalinism and that of Solidarity. Solidarity, Bronisław Łagowski maintained, represented a “philosophy of revolution”³² (without the “self-limiting” part). It was struggling for an equal share in power, rather than for a limited government and negative liberty. This was especially the case with the idea of self-government whose similarity to that of democratic socialism had, in his view, a totalitarian ring. This link between Stalinism and Solidarity was perhaps best expressed by Andrzej Walicki himself:

Solidarity must be seen as a socialist mass movement, one striving for at least a share of political power, but not one seeking to limit political power in the name of individual freedom. It is a movement aiming not so much at the separation of economics from politics, but rather the democratization of political decision-making. It is a democratic movement, but can hardly be called liberal, because it opposes authoritarian bureaucratic collectivism not in the name of individualistic values, but in the name of democratic collectivism of the masses. It wants to divide political power, but it is not sufficiently aware of the desirability of limiting the scope of all political power, including

³¹ Dzielski, *Odrodzenie Ducha*, 95.

³² B. Łagowski, “Filozofia Rewolucji czy Filozofia Państwa” in *Co jest lepsze od prawdy* (Cracow: Wydawnictwo Literackie, 1986), 169–170.

democracy. In this sense we can even say that the political thinking of the leaders of Solidarity (not to mention its ordinary members) is contaminated to some extent by the spirit of socialist totalitarianism—in spite of the verbal condemnation of all kinds of totalitarian power.³³

The argument about the totalitarianism of Solidarity rested on three assumptions. First, it was based on a slippery-slope logic inherent in Cold War liberalism, according to which there was nothing in between the free market and liberal constitutionalism (with or without democracy) on the one hand, and socialist totalitarianism on the other. Second, it was not important that in public statements the union leadership was recognizing both the superiority of the market economy and the universality of human rights. What mattered was a mysterious subconscious level in which Solidarity appeared as populist, collectivist, and egalitarian. This alleged subconscious, thirdly, was reconstructed with careful avoidance of the fine socio-economic detail. Even in 1980–1981, there were hardly any illusions that economic reform could work without drastic increase of social suffering. According to Solidarity leadership, the self-management bodies were not its democratic substitute, but an instrument of control of its effective realization. The strategy was rooted not in some general aversion to meritocracy, but in a rather sober reaction to the long record of socialist mismanagement. The realists, who were accusing Solidarity of acting as if the Poland of the 1980s were a Stalinist country, at the same time pretended as if arguments about meritocracy, private property relations, or redistribution of income had the same meaning under a flourishing market economy and under a command economy in its terminal phase.

The realists, who rejected the primacy of politics over economics, nevertheless trusted the authorities to channel national energies towards overcoming the crisis, if only given a chance. True, the *new* realism was different from the old one in that it proposed not a democratization of the socialist economy, but its liberalization. However it was similar to the realists of the old sort in that the agent of reform, in whom they invested their hopes, was the liberal (and entrepreneurial) fraction of the party-state elite. It was in the best interests of the ruling elite—itself ex-communist in its ideological beliefs, but at the same time mistrustful in the mass democracy—to limit its rule in economic omni-competence and open a space for negative liberty, especially in the realm of property relations and freedom of entrepreneurship, in order to retain political hegemony. For all those

³³ Walicki, “Notes on Jaruzelski’s Poland,” 354.

reasons, the realists argued, an enlightened dictatorship was not only necessary, but also desirable. It was necessary in the sense that it would be unrealistic to push for a full market economy and democracy directly and without intermediary steps. But it was also desirable that there be a transitional phase, in which the dictatorial power would be used to placate the masses and create a capitalist middle class. Mirosław Dzielski expected that only after thirty years of economic freedom and exposure to Christian work ethics under a tutelary authoritarian government would political democracy be possible.

At this point, we are safe to conclude that totalitarianism was the single most important regulative principle of independent political thought, an idea that served as a demarcation line between what was possible and impossible in politics. It oscillated between a sense of open-endedness of the political process and possibility of civic self-empowerment on the one hand, and on the other, skepticism derived from experience about the possibility of any consolidated improvements. The perception of political limits depended as well upon an understanding of the other two realms of totalitarianism: on the level of the social, it took into consideration the effects of the socialist state on morality, political culture, and collective memory; on the reflexive level, it meant caution to avoid dangerous trap-pings of anti-communist radicalism. Finally, as we saw, also for the new realists who otherwise defied the conceptual framework used by the democratic opposition, totalitarianism also made a difference. In this case it was the “socialist mentality” of the masses and the Jacobinism of the dissidents, which for them translated into skepticism about the possibility and desirability of political democracy in the short run.

The Transitional *Kairos* and the War on the Top

The adventures of the concept of totalitarianism did not finish with the collapse of the Eastern Bloc. On the contrary, the post-history of totalitarianism during the post-communist transitions is arguably as important as the late-socialist debates. For a long time, scholarship about the post-1989 politics in the region has been dominated by transitology, which favored measurable models of large-scale processes over the historically-specific.³⁴ The task of the intellectual historian is to ask what was historically specific about the post-communist transitions. There are many ways

³⁴ See further the introduction to this volume.

of answering this question. My own solution is to start with the most general, the form of temporality itself or the transitional *kairos*.³⁵ Unlike in periods of politics-as-usual, where the present and the future have a more or less a stabilized meaning, the transitional temporality is best understood by reference to the concept of “spectral ontology,” as coined by Jacques Derrida on the margins of the *Communist Manifesto*.³⁶ The term undoes the distinction between actual and effective reality and absence, the lack of effectiveness and actuality. There are historical moments—the post-1989 transition was precisely such a conjuncture—when it is difficult, if not impossible, to distinguish between “the future-to-come and the coming-back of a specter.”³⁷ Transitional temporality is a mixture of hope about the reinvention of democracy and fears that the process leading to the European future might be weighed down by the totalitarian past.

One of the substantial wagers of the political field emerging after 1989 was (to borrow the phrase of Tadeusz Mazowiecki) to “draw a thick line under the past.” Despite the intentions of Poland’s first non-communist prime minister—refusing liability for the actions of his predecessors—the phrase became proverbial and acquired a life of its own. It was a call to reconciliation for some, and to amnesia for others. But to draw a line under the past was at the same time to underline its unwanted presence. And it was to put some present phenomena on the side of the past, which now became the excluded side. Thus, the emerging post-totalitarian divide meant not only a temporal break, but a politically contested practice of temporal demarcation. To a large degree, the political contest over the

³⁵ I use the concepts “kairos” and “temporality” to designate the historical and political dimension of the social experience of time. “Kairos” is a concept from classical rhetoric, which defines an ability to take advantage of the contingent in the oratorical performance. In contrast to “chronos,” the passage of time as such, “kairos” implies a sense of time, a sense of space of possibilities opened in a particular moment. The sociologist Pierre Bourdieu employs the concept with reference to the sense of what is possible and proper in a given social interaction, which distinguishes social classes depending on their acquired dispositions. In intellectual history Reinhart Koselleck uses a more general term of “temporality” to bring attention to the fact that the study of the history of concepts must include not only social, political and linguistic contexts, but also the “space of experience” and the “horizon of expectations” specific for a given period. See R. Koselleck, *Futures Past: On the Semantics of Historical Time* (New York: Columbia University Press 2004).

³⁶ J. Derrida, “Spectres of Marx,” *New Left Review* 1, 205 (1994): 31–58. As readers of Derrida have surely noticed, I used his concept of spectrality with a rather different intent.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 35.

post-totalitarian divide was determined by the existing understanding of totalitarianism. However, under the transitional circumstances, its semantics were played out in new ways and rendered unintended outcomes.

Modern historical imagination pictures foundational moments of democracy as glorious acts in which the political sovereign, the people, makes its appearance on the historical stage to affirm its collective will. Later on, the foundational act serves as the myth that expresses symbolic unity. The Polish foundation of democracy was nothing of the sort. As some, including Bronisław Geremek, the mastermind behind the Round Table accords, would come to regret, the negotiated regime change was nothing particularly spectacular: the political action smoothly passed from the streets, churches, and factories to the closed corridors of ministries and governmental villas.³⁸ More importantly, the undeniable breakthrough of the June 1989 elections and the constitution of the first non-communist government were soon eclipsed by the swift disintegration of the democratic opposition.

What came to be known as the “War on the Top” was a struggle between two major factions within the Round Table opposition regarding the shape of the emerging political field.³⁹ The major parties to the conflict included a group of leading figures of the Citizens' Committee to the Solidarity Chairman (*Komitet Obywatelski przy Przedewodniczącym NSZZ “Solidarność,”* KO) who gathered around Tadeusz Mazowiecki and Bronisław Geremek, the leaders of the Civic Parliamentary Club (*Obywatelski Klub Parlamentarny,* OKP). They were opposed by a number of mostly right-wing political groups both inside and outside the “contractual” parliament. Leading positions were soon assumed by the twin brothers Lech and Jarosław Kaczyński, who in May 1990 established the Centre Alliance (*Porozumienie Centrum,* PC) and temporarily managed to earn the favor of the charismatic leader of Solidarity.⁴⁰ The former group supported maintaining unity within the ranks of the parliamentary representation of the opposition side of the Round Table accords and subordinating under their leadership both the re-legalized trade union and the social movement of local civic committees which coalesced in the midst of the

³⁸ B. Geremek, “Historyk w Świecie Polityki,” *Gazeta Wyborcza*, January 9–10, 1993.

³⁹ Cf. R. Krasowski, *Po południu: Upadek elit solidarnościowych po zdobyciu władzy* (Warsaw: Czerwone i Czarne, 2012).

⁴⁰ This necessarily summary description does not do justice for the plurality of the political entities that came out of the ranks of the anti-communist opposition. More on the conservative part of the spectrum in Matyja; article in this volume.

electoral campaign. They advised postponing the next, fully democratic elections until the necessary reforms had been introduced and reacted favorably to the will of cooperation shown by the heirs to the Polish United Workers' Party (PUWP), dissolved in January 1990. They thus stuck to the letter of the Round Table agreements, but against the spirit of rejection of the old regime as manifested in the June 1989 elections.

The latter group voiced the discontent of all those inside the ranks of the anti-communist opposition who felt marginalized from the process of transitional decision making and called for speeding-up the political and economic transformation. The supporters of "acceleration" (the umbrella term which provided a common denominator to a proliferation of otherwise dissimilar agendas) accused Mazowiecki's government of being too soft on the former communists, refusing to purge the public administration and tolerating the process of privatization of the bankrupt party's estate by its ex-members to the detriment of the newly emerging political entities. In particular, they demanded the transforming of the local civic committees movement into a social infrastructure for newly emerging political groups and successfully pressed for presidential elections in which Lech Wałęsa would be their candidate. However, Wałęsa, after his victory in 1990 over Mazowiecki running as counter-candidate, opted for autonomy with regard to the acceleration camp that violently turned against him. The PC formed a ruling coalition in 1991, which would be overthrown shortly after the so-called "night of the files," the scandal concerning Antoni Macierewicz's disclosure of a list of alleged collaborators of the security apparatus of the old regime containing many names of their political rivals from the Solidarity camp, Wałęsa included.

As a short term consequence, the "night of the files" and the polarization it brought about would lead to the discrediting of the post-Solidarity camp as a whole and the accession of the post-communists to power in the elections of 1993. At a deeper level, the war on the top was a pivotal moment that defined the content and the form of existing adversarial relations within contemporary Polish political culture. It was a contest over the form and meaning of the post-totalitarian divide. This makes it the best place to observe the post-history of totalitarianism in the making.

A Path Not Taken

For Bronisław Geremek, the transitional character of the Polish realities consisted first and foremost of a set of specific paradoxes of political and public life. The same communist general that decided to crush the Solidarity movement in 1981 was elected President by Solidarity votes in 1989. The republic found itself between independence and political democracy on the one hand, and the political contract that had initiated the changes and still held, on the other. As a consequence of the political contract one part of the deputies in the parliament expressed—for the first time in almost half a century—the legitimate will of the nation, while the other part was appointed by a regime that no longer existed. As Geremek saw it, “transition” should be understood not so much as a drastic moment of rejection of dictatorial government and economic planning, but as a specific historical interval in which the bases of a pluralist and democratic social order were only starting to take shape. The transition had to face three types of threats. First of all there was the danger of populism, which fed on “egalitarian illusions” common to the post-communist mindset, an easy prey for the political demagogues. Secondly, a democratic deficit in the “way of thinking” coupled with institutional weaknesses might breed authoritarian temptations. Thirdly, while “under communist rule the simplest form of resistance was the appeal to the national feeling,” in the face of massive social transformation it could easily deform into a morbid nationalism. Those three dangers, Geremek argued:

neither erase nor diminish the chances that stand ahead of the Central European countries in the transitional period. They justify however the gradual character of the changes and account for a philosophy of action which demands a necessary transitional stage in the passage from authoritarianism to democracy.⁴¹

The main threads in Geremek’s argument appeared in public statements of other prominent figures supporting the Mazowiecki’s government path to transformation.⁴² They reflected succinctly the spirit of the transition, as understood by its architects. This philosophy of action consisted in a rough balance between hopes and fears. Initially it was tilted on the side of hope, as the former dissidents had lofty expectations about reinventing

⁴¹ B. Geremek, “Polski układ nadziei,” *Tygodnik Powszechny*, June 17, 1990.

⁴² A. Michnik, “Three Kinds of Fundamentalism,” in *Letters from Freedom: Post-Cold War Realities and Perspectives*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998), 178–184.

Solidarity as a spearhead of the transition. In Michnik's words Solidarity was:

a specifically Polish synthesis of formerly competing orientations...a movement growing organically out of the Polish soil and a Polish struggle against the totalitarian system. The set of Solidarity's principles is comprised of Christian ethics and a declared proximity to the values of the Catholic Church; the national tradition of struggle for freedom, independence, and tolerance; the persistent struggle for social justice and the emancipation of Labor; for truth in the world of political conflicts and rationality in the world of economic decisions.

This image, arguably corresponding to Solidarity's own understanding, was all too familiar. At the same time, however, the transitional *kairos* had a recognizable new imprint on Michnik's sense of political possibility:

I presume that it is impossible to reconstruct the universe of the political divisions valid only a year ago. We entered a period in which new divisions typical for the post-totalitarian evolution shall be shaped. The democratic idea will clash with the nostalgia for authoritarianism; the European idea with the parochial nationalism, the open society with the closed society. This is why I maintain that a movement like Solidarity is needed in Poland.⁴³

Despite this initial attempt at reinventing Solidarity under new circumstances, the "synthesis of formerly competing orientations" could not be eventually redeemed. Partially it was because of the tension between universality of the program and the contested agent supposed to keep this universality together. Popper's political philosophy is one of an already constituted democratic polity. In the Popperian sense, "open society" defines a sort of minimal consensus for the form of a democratic community, leaving the content to the play of different perspectives. The concept changes its meaning when transformed—under Michnik's pen—from a regulative idea about external boundaries of politics into a mapping of internal divisions in which the political adversary turns into an enemy of the open society at large.

But there were also other reasons. Clearly, personal ambitions and personal rivalries played their role, but then again politics is never free from the personal element, which nevertheless can impose itself only in certain

⁴³ A. Michnik, "Związek zawodowy już nie wystarczy," *Gazeta Wyborcza*, October 6, 1989. See also E. Skalski, "Bieda-Partie," *Gazeta Wyborcza*, April 7, 1990; M. Kozłowski "Rzeczpospolita Bezpartyjna?," *Tygodnik Powszechny*, March 18, 1990.

circumstances. In 1989, the conflict of ambitions was exasperated by the fluidity of the emerging power structure. It was not at all certain where power resided; whether in the government, with Mazowiecki, in the parliament or with Geremek, or altogether outside the sphere of institutional politics, in the Gdańsk office of Solidarity's chairman, in the Warsaw headquarters of the Citizen Committee or within the network of the local committees spread countrywide.

Also, the Solidarity that re-emerged from the underground was an entirely different movement. Much attention has been paid to how weak and divided it was by comparison to the period of its legal existence, with its unity grounded in national and Catholic imagery and charismatic leadership. More emphasis should rather be put on the institutional level. In the years 1980–1981 Solidarity's uniqueness consisted of its deliberative and participatory institutions. Whatever its actual contents, *The Self-Governing Republic*, the action program adopted by the first Solidarity congress in 1981, was a realization of the promise of civic self-empowerment, where institutionalized politics is rooted in the civic society and political platforms are not imposed in the electoral campaign but constructed at the grassroots. It was primarily because of its democratic mandate of ten million members, and only secondarily because of its symbolic manifestations of national unity, that Solidarity, despite itself, became the embodiment of constituent power *vis-à-vis* the party state.

In 1989 Solidarity was not reborn in such a form. The Civic Committee of Lech Wałęsa, which was the only point of convergence between the government, the parliamentary caucus, the local civic committees, and the re-emerging trade union cells was an entirely different institution by comparison to the National Coordinating Commission of 1980–1981. Solidarity's old executive body consisted of leaders with delegated mandates and later also members elected during the congress. The group was spearheaded by the chairman and supported by experts. The Civic Committee consisted of public figures assembled on the basis of self-cooptation under the auspices of Wałęsa. It worked without any formalized rules and its legitimacy depended not on the principle of representation, but on mutual recognition. All this was because the members of the Civic Committee never supposed that they would have got as far as the commanding heights. After all it was just an advisory body, which in 1989 suddenly found itself at the helm of the transition process. However, due to this institutional weakness and lack of legitimacy it became the principal battleground as well as the first victim of the “war on the top,” sacrificed by the feuding parties due to irreconcilable differences of interest and strat-

egy. These were irreconcilable not in principle, but because of the lack of clear rules of the game.

Secondly, there was a tension between the monetarist logic of Balcerowicz's "shock therapy" and older ideas about the role of the citizens in dealing with economic crises that was valid as late as the June 1989 elections. Monetarism, whatever its merits and shortcomings, operates on the macroeconomic level and does not say much about the social and political dynamics of civil society. From this perspective, self-management was looked upon with scorn as just a soft, "third road" variant of primacy of politics over economics. In this sense David Ost was correct to argue that if the revolution of 1989 was made under Solidarity's banner, the victory was at the same time the defeat of Solidarity as an economically inclusive and participatory democratic project.⁴⁴

Once the program of self-management was discarded, no other ideas emerged for citizen involvement and on how to generate trust in the process of transition. Balcerowicz's plan was oriented towards building "capitalism without capitalists" with macroeconomic tools, and saw workers as the future incumbents of the capitalist middle class, rather than as actually existing people with legitimate needs and entitlements. This lack of responsiveness to the microeconomic preoccupations of the average citizen pushed Solidarity to become what it in fact became: a classical trade union with a vindictive approach to worker-employer relations. Since the single biggest employer was the state, now governed by the veterans of the democratic opposition, the situation could not have ended without major conflict.

Thirdly, there was a tension between a general understanding of the transition as a "return to Europe," and Solidarity as a historically unique political actor. For the architects of the transition it became an impossible task to propose a Westernizing project and at the same time to reinvent Solidarity as a broadly based political platform with "civic" and "trade union" wings which should spearhead the process of the great change. This contradictory position, as we shall see, was especially vulnerable to the leaders of what became many emerging political parties who argued, in chorus, that the cornerstone of a European political system is the party, whereas what Solidarity intellectuals were proposing resembled politics in Mexico or India, if it was not in fact a new "mono-party."⁴⁵

⁴⁴ D. Ost, *The Defeat of Solidarity: Anger and Politics in Post-communist Europe* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 2005).

⁴⁵ M. Drozdek, "Michnika projekt monopartii," *Ład*, October 29, 1989.

Powerless in Power

It was important to recall that the space of uncertainty that the transition opened was at the same time a space of political possibility. At that initial point, an Arendtian appetite for a new beginning (Solidarity was not exactly new, still, its future might have been unprecedented) sided with fears that the fragile fundamentals of democracy would collapse under the weight of its own past. It was fear that got the upper hand.

It is hard to pinpoint the moment when the new post-dissident political elite started to see Solidarity as a liability rather than an asset. However suffice it to say that the same thinker who in 1989 praised Solidarity as a “synthesis of formerly competing orientations” in 1991 came to see it as “revolt of the crowd,” an anti-communist rebellion of slaves whose main characteristic was populism. Solidarity’s political discourse, now argued its most celebrated fellow traveler, was irrational because it was based on a “them versus us” dichotomy instead of a rational analysis of social and political interests. It was simply an anti-communist revolt in the name of social justice, the value that for decades legitimized communist rule. All in all, it was a “revolt of the crowd” on which the rational discourse of the dissident elite, the discourse of democratic-legal procedures, had no civilizing effect. On the contrary, it was the elites that learned the advantage of speaking “the language of the crowd.”⁴⁶

Once the utopia of Solidarity, the promise of civic self-empowerment, had been discarded, what remained was a strange political language of powerless-in-power. Its best approximation is perhaps Judith Shklar’s “liberalism of fear.”⁴⁷ Remarkably, this resemblance constituted a vast reconfiguration, rather than a logical culmination, of the language of power of the powerless. It is the great merit of Jerzy Szacki’s *Liberalism after Communism*⁴⁸ to have demonstrated that if the revolutions of 1989 can be called a triumph of liberalism, the political force that brought about 1989 was *not* liberal. As we have already seen, the new realists that consciously raised the banner of liberalism in the 1980s built their political identities on the critique of Solidarity and the old opposition. Moreover, the dissidents and the leaders of Solidarity, as Szacki correctly insisted, were at best “proto-liberal” (*nota bene* this peculiar denomination is rather

⁴⁶ A. Michnik, “Three Kinds of Fundamentalism,” 182.

⁴⁷ J. Shklar, “Liberalism of Fear” in *Political liberalism: Variations on a theme*, ed. Shaun Young (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2004), 147–167.

⁴⁸ J. Szacki, *Liberalism after Communism* (Budapest–New York: CEU Press, 1995).

misleading in its assumption of a teleological horizon of aspirations, but that misreading was rather emblematic for the spirit of the times). Nevertheless, if one can speak about liberal elements in pre-1989 dissident political thought, this would be either of the two other variants of liberalism that Shklar mentioned in her essay: Locke's liberalism of rights (a product of the 1975 Helsinki Agreements) and John Stuart Mill's liberalism of self-development (to the extent it connected with the post-Marxist critiques of alienation). For neither is the defense against cruelty and strong religious, ethical or political creeds a substitute for a normative vision of a good social order. By contrast, the liberalism of fear boasted a normative negativity, grounding itself in a universal emotion, fear, and especially the fear of cruelty executed by the state.

Shklar (borrowing from Waldo Emerson) defined the liberalism of fear as a "party of memory rather than a party of hope."⁴⁹ The fear-driven political language of the powerless in power in its mature form was saturated with the existing understanding of totalitarianism. However the way they coalesced into new discursive forms produced unexpected outcomes.

We have already hinted at some of the elements of this vast discursive reconfiguration. The real triumph of the Cold War liberals in 1989 was not only the fact that despite not representing a significant political force, they managed to occupy the key positions in transitional policy-making as well as set the tone in the realm of ideas. Their argument about Solidarity's "socialist mentality" made its way into the public speech of the high-profile supporters of the Solidarity government. Yet it worked both ways: the Cold War liberals also had to forsake the idea of tutelary dictatorship, even though Geremek's idea of the transition does bear an uncanny resemblance to Działyński's prognoses. Nevertheless, by contrast to Hayek's liberalism, political democracy and personal freedom are one and indivisible for the liberalism of fear, as only the former can counteract the concentration of power which is the threat to the latter.

That said, the post-dissident political elite borrowed wholeheartedly from Cold War liberalism in what concerns the post-totalitarian mentality. As we recall, before 1989, the opposition thinkers invoked the concept of "captive mentality" in order to shake up the passive socialist subject and awaken the citizen. It was an answer to the question of why people do not want to reclaim their rights. After 1989, the object of the critique became not the civic passivity, but rather the increasingly present instances of political mobilization in the name of redistributive claims to an equal

⁴⁹ Shklar, "Liberalism of Fear," 154–155.

share in the burdens of the capitalist restructuring. And the former *new realists* presented the most coherent argument to counter these claims.

Michnik's intellectual trajectory from the “synthesis of the formerly competing orientations” to the “revolt of the crowd” is just one of the examples of this shift. Another is the case of Józef Tischner, a Catholic priest and expert in phenomenology, the erstwhile chaplain of Solidarity during the 1981 Congress and the author of one of the most influential articulations of its ethos, the *Ethics of Solidarity*.⁵⁰ In 1989, Tischner started to build up a highly persuasive narrative of transition that focused on Zinoviev's *homo sovieticus*, thus opening the first chapter of its post-history.⁵¹

Homo sovieticus, according to Tischner, referred to the residues of the totalitarian past that persisted in people's minds and habits. Communism, Tischner argued, was a “mono-logical society,” predicated upon the existence of a single vantage point from which truth about society could be grasped in its totality, e.g. the point of view of power, whereas particular subjects were only “carriers of particular illusions.” Conversely, the “society of dialogue” to which post-communism aspired, had to be built on the assumption of an equal share of truth and illusion, a bottom-up rather than top-down vision of truth. In the passage from the mono-logical to dialogical society, the communist subject, in order to become a citizen, had to abandon the demand for somebody who defined how things really were, and also the demand that those at the top identify themselves with those at the bottom, which for Tischner, amounted to a longing for a dictatorship.

Moreover, Tischner reminded, the Soviet way of life consisted in an indissoluble link between the denial of “right to self-possession” (individual and civic autonomy) and the denial of property rights. *Homo sovieticus* in Tischner's post-history was a “socialized man.” Communism, having divorced the work and the satisfaction of needs from the concept of individual property, introduced instead a habit of “socialist consumerism,” the habit of taking pleasure in using somebody else's goods. This is why the post-totalitarian metamorphosis would not happen unless the former communist subject recognized that property rights were the foundation of civic society, that multiplying capital was the only criterion of productive work and that the only alternative to exploitation was “to have one's life

⁵⁰ J. Tischner, *The Spirit of Solidarity* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1982).

⁵¹ J. Tischner, “Dokąd prowadzi ta droga?,” *Tygodnik Powszechny*, 19 November 1989; “Homo Sovieticus. Między Wawelem a Jasną Górą,” *Tygodnik Powszechny*, 24 June 1990.

wasted.” Conversely, the protest against labor exploitation, the effects of hyperinflation on living conditions, or unpaid wages ubiquitous in the process of creating a privatized market economy, should be understood as a symptom of the post-totalitarian mentality of a still communist subject who could not be included in the community of dialogue. In other words, Tischner, linking the “right to self-possession” with property rights, at the same time identified claims to social justice and longing for dictatorship as mirroring expressions of the same post-totalitarian mentality.

While this semantic transformation of the concept of “captive mentality” in the political language of the powerless in power was a great triumph of Cold War liberalism, the other aspects of that paradigm switch consisted less in borrowing than in the displacement of emphasis within the general framework. This is especially the case of the concept of the totalitarian temptation. As we recall, “captive mentality” and “totalitarian temptation” formed a conceptual double. The critique of captive mentality was coupled with a reminder that building a political identity on a distinction between a virtuous elite and captive masses led to a vicious circle of anti-totalitarian negation and totalitarian repetition.

During and after the regime change this link was broken. Not only did the semantic transformation of “captive mentality” occur, but “totalitarian temptation” acquired a new meaning. In the political language of the powerless in power it came to be associated with demands for transitional justice. True, the power of the powerless was also founded on the renunciation of violence and hatred, but to say the least, it did accommodate a concept of political responsibility, as long as it was administered in a law-abiding rather than a lynch-like form. But in the course of the transition, the demands for political prosecution and the vetting of the ex-communist elite were understood as a clarion call to another Jacobin adventure. Whereas before the relation between “captive mentality” and “totalitarian temptation” was a self-limiting mutual balance, after 1989 they acquired a self-reinforcing dynamic and became externalized to the political adversary. Quite indicative of the meaning of the passage from power of the powerless to powerless in power was the fact that the fraction of the ex-dissident elites that came to occupy the positions of command in 1989, lost its former self-reflexivity in the little empathy it had for the *homo sovieticus* and in the imperative demands for spiritual metamorphosis. Moreover, both the demands for redistributive justice and retributive justice became two sides of the same post-totalitarian coin. The former became identified—as we have seen in Tischner—with a longing for a strong-man, the latter with the Jacobins who would like to “build their own Bastilles.”

The independent political thinkers hoped to immunize themselves against the totalitarian temptation through taking a critical approach toward political ideologies. During the transition from communism, this ecumenical trait remained a part of their self-image (hence the “synthesis of formerly competing orientations”), however, what predominated in practice was an anxiety about resurgent nationalism. Adam Michnik was alarmed that “totalitarianism in the terminal phase leaves the legacy of aggressive nationalism and tribal hatred,”⁵² reminding that humanist and European ideas of civil society and human rights was not the only political platform available to the anti-communist opposition. There was also the idea of the “Catholic State of the Polish Nation,” the nationalist doctrine with its roots in the repertoire of the interwar Right. Nationalism, together with two other “fundamentalisms”—the religious fanaticism and ethical absolutism of the anti-communist underground—was, according to Michnik, a symptom of an inability to critically reassess Polish historical consciousness:

Without such a reassessment, we are doomed to idealize our past, we are doomed to a sense of history burdened with myths rather than sober judgments, and we are doomed to be defenseless against what might be called the revenge of memory, a memory that was for years relegated to our subconscious.⁵³

To the extent that the Poles were unable to “overcome” their past by reassessing the legitimacy of the political legacies, they were vulnerable against the present dangers. What endangered the present, Michnik clearly implied, was not so much the immediate legacy of communism, but vicious heritage rooted deeper in the collective memory.

Under the impact of the specter of nationalism, what happened was probably the most radical semantic shift in the whole discourse on “totalitarianism.” Before 1989, however nuanced its understanding was, the real sense of political danger referred to “totalitarianism” *qua* communist regime, whereas the totalitarian temptation, however disturbing, was just a potentiality. In the circumstance of the actually collapsed socialism, however, the tables had turned. And the most visible referent of “totalitarianism” became the Catholic-nationalist counter-insurgency against communism, as if the essence of the latter was outside itself in the sort of reaction it produced, rather than in the atrocities its functionaries committed. It was

⁵² A. Michnik, “Pułapka Nacjonalizmu,” *Gazeta Wyborcza*, 10 February 1990.

⁵³ Michnik, “Three Kinds of Fundamentalism,” 178.

the so-called refrigerator theory of totalitarianism, according to which the worst thing about communism was that it lent credibility to all three: nationalism, religious fundamentalism, and populism of workers' demands as long as they were wrapped in an anti-communist banner. Whereas in the West all these political vices were supposedly overcome, under socialism the authoritarian mindset of its subjects outlived its fall in a "frozen" form. Furthermore the expansion of the semantic field of totalitarianism towards examination of the historical consciousness and the "revenge of memory" made it possible to include within its orbit the political ideologies historically preceding the emergence of the totalitarian state, thus making any restorative attempts look suspicious.

Anti-Communism after Communism

Above we have seen that one of the most important aspects of the transitional reconfiguration of political languages was the merger between formerly competing concepts of totalitarianism of the ex-dissident elite and the liberal new realists. That merger had one fundamental secondary effect, both a cause and a consequence: in the midst of a rapidly-polarizing political field, radical anti-communism emerged as the strongest language of political contestation.

What came to be known as the program of acceleration was the common denominator of a plethora of political groups on the Right who were advocating a more decisive political breakthrough in the process of transformation, especially when it came to the presence of the representatives of the old regime in the political and economic arenas. According to Jarosław Kaczyński, the political dilemma of the day was whether "to build the society anew, renovate it, or build with what you have on this petrified and still decomposing ground of communism. The latter is happening now with clearly visible consequences. My party claims that the society needs to be built from scratch. No thick lines."⁵⁴

Despite the anxieties voiced by the powerless-in-power, the accelerators in fact did not challenge the fundamentals of the European package of the transition. They were neither against the capitalist restructuring, nor against representative democracy. On the contrary, it was these circles, who considered themselves marginalized from the processes of strategic

⁵⁴ *Odwrotna strona medalu: Z Jarosławem Kaczyńskim rozmawia Teresa Bochwic* (Warsaw: Most and Verba, 1991), 95.

decision-making, which most strongly advocated an opening for political parties and criticized the attempts at reviving Solidarity to the spearhead of transition as nothing short of the “mono-party” under a new guise. Similarly, the critics of the Mazowiecki government were not only decidedly pro-capitalist, but in fact they sought to present themselves as having better credentials in the task of transforming “Marx to market.” However, the camp of acceleration presented both the political and the economic argument in a specific populist form. A form that did not exactly correspond with Kaczyński's true convictions, but which he deemed a necessary shock absorber for increasing social tensions which otherwise, he believed,⁵⁵ would end up turning against the whole therapy. In his intention, political polarization was providing a political spectacle which would turn attention away from the harsh realities of economic restructuring.⁵⁶

The aim of acceleration was to contest the dominant narrative of transition and redefine the terms of the political division built around the concept of totalitarianism. First, that required challenging the ecumenical ideological offer of the architects of the transition and reducing it from an allegedly universally acceptable framework of political cooperation to a particular political standpoint, that of the Left. Secondly, this political leveling took advantage of the political circumstances of the first non-communist government, which despite this appellation had to negotiate a *modus vivendi* with the functionaries of the old regime, who, having lost the political initiative, were still considered to have a decisive influence in state administration, military, and police apparatus.⁵⁷

The transitional *kairos* left its mark also on the political language of the advocates of the “acceleration.” However, here the predicament of distinguishing between “the future to come and the return of the (communist) specter” was articulated within the cluster of meanings of totalitarianism that had been the hallmark of the radical anti-communist underground. This framework was focused almost entirely upon the regime. It was an image of the regime terminally weak but, at the same time, omnipotent; on the edge of collapse but the only source of political facts, not only those that it deliberately caused and acknowledged, but also those which it apparently inspired and provoked. Finally, it was a regime whose

⁵⁵ This diagnosis was shared by Wałęsa, see “Prezydentem nie chcę zostać... , ... będę musiał zostać: Z Lechem Wałęsą rozmawia Anna Bikont,” *Gazeta Wyborcza*, April 20, 1990.

⁵⁶ *Odwrotna strona medalu*, 105–6, 111–12.

⁵⁷ *Ibid*, 84.

symptoms of weakness were the very proof of its strength, since those symptoms might as well have been another strategic maneuver. From this the political platform the militant anti-communists opposed the Round Table accords and called for a boycott of the June 1989 elections. The accelerators mainstreamed the radical anti-communist narrative in order to articulate growing discontent and confusion resulting from the pace of change on the one hand, and the distancing and technocratic style of the powerless-in-power, on the other.

Thus, “acceleration” meant not only a call for speeding-up the political calendar for fully free elections, but also a demand for a hard line against the ex-communists. Poland, Kaczyński argued, rather than transforming into a capitalist democracy, was trapped in a “post-communist settlement.”⁵⁸ The lukewarm but steady devolution of power by the elites of the old regime was not a decisive evidence of the old regime’s collapse as long as there was nothing to guarantee that a backlash would not occur. Despite the disintegration of the ruling party and the whole Eastern bloc, the Soviet secret service network remained in place and, more importantly, the Soviet representatives did not exactly lose power, but rather exchanged their political capital into economic assets via the so called *nomenklatura* privatization. Since capital is by nature convertible, the danger was that the *nomenklatura* privatization, rather than being just a price for political peace, would pave the way for the communists to come back into the political arena, either as an organized political force or a secret-service-cum-economic network controlling politics from the back-seat through the pecuniary carrot on the one hand and the stick of secret police files on the other.⁵⁹

From the perspective of the sudden decomposition of communist regimes all over Central Europe, the gradual strategy of Mazowiecki was retroactively presented as the (irrational) “cult of the Round Table.” Retroactively, what only months earlier seemed to be a political cost of transition was suddenly presented as preferential treatment given to the survivors of the bankrupt regime. What before was a heroic leap forward now became a sin of oblivion. The party was allowed to keep its property and its media. The cadres of the old regime still decided everything in the ministerial offices, and the courts were dominated by the “butchers from the Stalinist trials.” The burden of the communist past had a suffocating

⁵⁸ Ibid, 84–86.

⁵⁹ J. Staniszkis, *The dynamics of the breakthrough in Eastern Europe: the Polish experience* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991).

effect on the still nascent future. The problem was not in the old habits of the people facing new realities. The people had every reason not to perceive the reality as new.

The people, even if they perceive some changes, do not consider themselves its authors. Psychological slavery towards the Round Table [Accords] has stripped the process of change of the dynamic energy of a social movement. Celebrated correctness towards the re-painted bankrupt with the simultaneous chanting of the word “democracy” has lowered the social attachment to the institution itself...The cabinet of Tadeusz Mazowiecki is surrounded today by a social void, which is a consequence of the fact that the majority of Poles do not perceive any evidence of change. They do perceive, by contrast, the persistence of the old arrangements, cliques, barriers, and absurdities.⁶⁰

It is important to note that being on the side of the people did not necessarily imply a protest against the social effects of “shock therapy.” On the contrary, the accelerators’ slogan was “Balcerowicz yes, Mazowiecki no.” The economic argument of the government’s rivals was what David Ost called “market populism.”⁶¹ Market populism pitted good capitalism against evil communism. The communist influences in the economy and politics were responsible for the deplorable situation of the country, it went. As long as the communists and its secret agents were not purged from state institutions, the market would not bring the beneficiary consequences for the country. The skyrocketing recession stimulated by the economic reforms was a problem, not because it brought a massive degradation of the living conditions, but precisely because it did *not* bring the desired effect of “mass bankruptcies and high unemployment which... would have endowed it with the reformatory sense in the form of capital flows towards profitable enterprises and new technologies.”⁶² Conversely, bankruptcy of the state enterprises was perceived as an act of historical justice.

Mazowiecki’s government, not putting a hold on the pathological phenomena defiant to the sense of justice, not settling the accounts with the *nomenklatura* cliques looting Poland and giving them access to capital, has triggered the moral erosion of social support for capitalism. The people will be willing to new sacrifices only if they find out that those who brought about their misery—the *nomenklatura*—suffers no less misery than they and has ceased to occupy the commanding posts. Otherwise, the *no-*

⁶⁰ J. Kurski, “Rok Mazowieckiego,” *Konfrontacje* 9 (1990).

⁶¹ Ost, *Defeat of Solidarity*, 155–156.

⁶² J. Kurski, “Rok Mazowieckiego.”

menklatura privatization will be greeted with the same indifference and hostility as the confiscation of private property by the communists in the 1940s.⁶³

In other words there was nothing wrong with social suffering as long as the suffering was morally right, that is, as long as it met the popular sense of justice. And the popular sense of justice, according to the accelerators, was founded on a discrimination between the anti-communist as “us” and the communist as “they.” Against this backdrop, Mazowiecki’s government was presented as an alienated elite, disconnected morally from the popular feeling. The people were genuinely Catholic, fiercely anti-communist, and decidedly pro-market, and by contrast, the elites only pretended to be tolerant to the Church, hampered the anti-communist revolution, and, keeping the *nomenklatura* in place, conserved the socialist economic structure.

Moreover, no effort was spared to demonstrate that the seemingly consensual cooperation between the ex-dissident and the ex-communist elites was not coincidental. The argument about the “residual communism” of the post-revisionist opposition, a recurring theme since the very emergence of the organized opposition in Poland in the 1970s, made a spectacular comeback.

As we have seen, one of the key-features of the political language of the powerless in power was the argument that the post-totalitarian divide should replace the inadequate and antiquated political divisions, especially Left versus Right. Incidentally, it was the Right that most of the supporters of the acceleration program happened to identify themselves with. However, their defense of the left-right divide did not translate into affirmation of political pluralism as such. In principle, invocation of the left-to-right spectrum supposes recognition of antagonistic, but mutually respectable political alternatives. The political language of acceleration, on the other hand, can be defined as “sly populism.” It was sly because it presented itself as bringing the political back in, but in fact played out the left-right divide on moral grounds. It was populist in organizing its political arguments around a dichotomy between a (differently understood) moral community and false elites, usurpers, and others threatening to steal peoples’ inalienable attributes (identity, sovereignty, rights). In the context of the transition, the accelerators employed the left-right divide in order to designate just such usurpers. Since there cannot be a right without a left, they argued, the seemingly ecumenical and universalist propositions of the powerless in power are just

⁶³ Ibid.

a smoke screen for their real plans. And the more *they* deny that they speak from a particular position, and the more loudly *we* admit it, the easier it is to show that *they* hide something from the rest of *us*.⁶⁴

For the right-leaning faction of the dissident elites who found themselves in a dominated position within the Solidarity camp, to cling to the left-right divide was a perfect solution. On the one hand, they could present themselves as traditional Christian-Democratic politicians and thus avoid occupying the dark side of the post-totalitarian divide, cast as political fundamentalists bringing the demons of the past back to life if not incarnating them. On the other hand, they could juxtapose their strong political identity allegedly more attuned with the traditions and values of the nation as a whole with the usurpers in power, who they claimed were pretending to be something different than they really were.

This radical anti-communist rhetoric of conceit and denunciation also meant that being on the Left did not really depend on explicit declarations (in these times only a courageous few would risk open affiliation, a political suicide). The criterion was, in the first place, genealogical. Being on the Left was presented as a biographical residue, an active element buried deep in somebody's political past which despite all the declarations and actions to the contrary, would define one's political agenda. And the nature of this political agenda would lie in its complicity with communism. Thus, according to the Right, Round Table accords were only apparently a negotiation between the democratic opposition and the representatives of the communist apparatus representing fundamentally different ideological choices. In fact it was a reunification of two groups of the Left that for accidental reasons of political ambition were fighting on opposite sides of the barricade.⁶⁵ Conversely, engagement in an anti-communist political movement (and the repression with which it was met) was retroactively presented as a factional struggle. In their orientation towards political compromise, they were complicit with the communists in taming the advance of national aspirations. Their role as collaborators was only revealed at the Round Table, but despite appearances, they had been collaborators all the time.⁶⁶

Finally, the sly populism of the supporters of acceleration combined an appeal for the opening of political parties (as a token of bringing Europe back in) with the idea of reviving Solidarity as another tactical maneuver

⁶⁴ J. Walc, "W poszukiwaniu zaginionej lewicy," *Wokanda*, June 17, 1991.

⁶⁵ J. M. Jackowski, "Nieobecni," *Lad*, January 14, 1990.

⁶⁶ L. Moczulski, "PZPR Odeszła, Nomenklatura Została," *Opinia*, March 11, 1990.

of the Left.⁶⁷ “Either Poland remains a post-communist hybrid, a country ruled by a mono-party, within which [everything] is decided by a group of lay Left and the allied Catholic Left... or Poland becomes a normal democratic country,” cried the Christian-Democratic politician and veteran of anti-communist underground Stefan Niesiołowski. “The political struggle in Poland... boils down by and large to the struggle against the Left, the struggle between the democratic forces and the advocates of a command-democracy of the same sort as the socialist democracy.”⁶⁸ That Solidarity was a leftist Trojan horse was evident from the calls to maintain unity within the camp of the democratic opposition, which resembled Niesiołowski of the communist struggle against deviations. Also, in his view, the attempt at substituting the “clear and universally agreed concept of Christian ethics ... with the concept of ‘the ethics of Solidarity’” constituted “a threat to the traditions of European political culture.” Another way of making the same argument was to borrow the Hayekian concept of “constructivism” (which most of the liberals abandoned once they had entered into alliance with the ex-dissidents). This was to counterpoise the fidelity to “clear and universally agreed” values and traditional social institutions professed by the Right against the ecumenical combination of critically acclaimed traditions in the discourse of the ex-dissident Left, the affirmative patriotism of the former against the critical patriotism of the latter. Secondly, it was to draw a parallel between this ideological bricolage with its critical outlook and the communist utopia of transforming human nature.

The rejection of Solidarity and its ethos as a leftist Trojan horse by the leaders of the acceleration is the chapter that is most glaringly missing from David Ost's narrative on the defeat of the movement. The liberals betrayed the workers because their political interests were determined by the emerging political field in general and by their adversary in particular, notwithstanding the later conservative appropriation of Solidarity's dead body in the name of republicanism. From a perspective of the present ideological constellation in Poland, it is remarkable to recall that strange complicity in adversity of thebetweenthe Right and the post-dissident liberals in undoing Solidarity's legacy.

⁶⁷ *Odwrotna strona medalu*, 74–76.

⁶⁸ S. Niesiołowski, “Reguły Gry,” *Ład*, June 10, 1990.

Epilogue

With time, the post-totalitarian divide severed its ties with the immediate historical experience, and as the post-communist politics consolidated, the concept itself faded away into oblivion. The supporters of the transition would be somewhat faster in bidding farewell to the concept of totalitarianism in their political thought than the critics, who would stick to the concept of post-communism defining a social formation characterized by the *damnosa hereditas* rather than more positive developments. Nevertheless, in both cases new layers of political thought would cover the old totalitarian framework: the liberal mantra of TINA (There Is No Alternative) and the conservative republicanism of virtue and tradition, the globalization and anti-globalization discourses, Europeanism and post-colonialism.

However, especially in times of political crisis, the old layer would sometimes resurface: populism and xenophobia would still bring about the fear of a totalitarian backlash, even though similar contemporary phenomena exist in countries where the Nazi or the communist experience had comparatively little impact. During crises, the existence of the “losers of the transformation” becomes more familiar and demands for equality less serious when associated with the *homo sovieticus*, whereas the imposed communist modernization and the mimetic modernization after 1989 collapse into a single image of non-sovereignty and peripherality. This in turn suggests, by way of conclusion, that the concept of totalitarianism still holds sway over political imaginary, and that, consequently, post-totalitarian politics is far from being a closed chapter of history.

Václav Havel, His Idea of Civil Society, and the Czech Liberal Tradition

MILAN ZNOJ

Soon after the start of the student strike at Charles University's Faculty of Arts in November 1989, the bust of Vladimir Lenin disappeared from the marble niche on the landing of the building's massive stone staircase and was replaced several days later by a bust of Tomáš Garrigue Masaryk. From now on, the democratic Masaryk and not the communist Lenin would keep a watchful eye over the stairs leading to university education. Of course, this act represented more than a mere change in the symbols of learning. A political change was underway, and symbols of culture and knowledge were changing alongside it. Masaryk became a figurehead for the democratic revival of Czech society. He was claimed not only by the students at the Faculty of Arts, but his return was felt by all of society. Masaryk was a moral and political symbol because he made comprehensible the way people understand political change and its inherent conflicts.¹ As perfectly exemplified by the placement of his bust at the university, Masaryk became a political symbol not because he had renewed Czech independence or because he had been a politician who "dedicated himself to the state," as stated by the famous "Lex Masaryk" from 1935. Instead, Masaryk represented the idea of a political philosopher, humanist, theoretician of democracy, and representative of a school of thought that hoped to establish democracy on humanist ideals. It is no accident that the first Czech film after November 1989 was a documentary about his life and work with the telling title *T.G.M. – Liberator*. The film's premiere on

¹ There are different ways of studying how people view, receive, and understand the political issues and conflicts of their time. In the rest of this text, I will stick to a discursive analysis that explores the issues and conflicts of the time by interpreting how people talk about perceptions, understanding, and conflicts – i.e., how they are reflected in texts and public speeches that form a part of a certain form of social behavior. In our case, this will involve the study of ideology within a specific political context as reflected in relevant texts.

March 7, 1990 marked the anniversary of his birth. Somewhat unusual, but symptomatic for the time, was the concurrent broadcast of the cinematic premiere on public television. Society as a whole saw Masaryk as a moral and political symbol of the renewed democracy.

On March 7, 2000, the 150th anniversary of Masaryk's birth, a life-sized sculpture of Masaryk was unveiled across from Prague Castle near the corner of Salmov Palace. Václav Havel was still president, but his era was slowly coming to an end. The unveiling of the statue across from the castle, that symbol of Czech statehood, represented the climax of a certain evolution of Masaryk's status as a political symbol that had begun in 1990. We might say that, in the end, the figure of Masaryk asserted itself as a symbol of Czech statehood. Every year on the anniversary of his death, the president of the Czech Republic (Václav Klaus since 2003) places a wreath at Masaryk's grave in Láňy near Prague. Official foreign visitors are also given this opportunity, in particular if it is to act as a symbolic reminder of the importance of the nation-state in relation to the EU. In September 2006, when the presidents of the Visegrad Four met to discuss a response to EU attempts to slow their admission to Schengen, they went to Masaryk's grave and honored his memory. In August 2011, when Serbia's president Tadić visited the Czech Republic after the EU had tightened the conditions for Serbian accession, pressing the country to recognize Kosovo's independence, Klaus received the Serbian president at the Láňy castle and took him to Masaryk's grave. The hosts even prepared a small exhibition recalling the historical record of good relations between the two countries, in particular the Little Entente signed after the First World War by Czechoslovakia, Yugoslavia, and Romania as a defense against Austrian and Hungarian irredentism. As a result of such acts of political piety, Masaryk became a symbol for the defense of national interests against foreign powers desiring to crush or humiliate them, a role played allegedly by the EU today from the point of view of the Czech New Right.

Czech democracy re-established itself between the placement of Masaryk's bust on the stairs and the unveiling of his statue at Prague Castle ten years later. During this time, Masaryk's role as a moral and political symbol underwent significant changes. In the end, the idea of Masaryk as an emblem of statehood and a politician who dedicated himself to the state prevailed. Remarkably, his identity as a moral and political symbol and proponent of a democracy based on the Czech liberal tradition and what he called humanist ideals disintegrated and faded away. Masaryk was brought back to life by the November revolution, but he did not survive its outcome.

In this article, I will attempt to defend the viewpoint that the Czech liberal tradition, of which Masaryk was a part, perished under the new democratic conditions after 1990 and was overwhelmed by the new political tradition of liberalism of the New Right. This victorious liberalism was based on a neoliberal consensus that shaped economic reforms in Central Europe. As I will point out, these economic reforms were accompanied by a process of rewriting the cultural and ideological maps of the new democracies at a time when their political and cultural traditions were being reshaped. In the case of the Czech Republic, this caused the Czech liberal tradition to become an uncomfortable part of the newly victorious liberalism. Thus held captive by the New Right, it was depleted and lost its ability to define the political conflicts within the new democracy.

Nevertheless Masaryk was undoubtedly the subject of serious theoretical and political interest in the 1990s. In the academic sphere, the Masaryk Institute was renewed and incorporated into the Czech Academy of Sciences at the beginning of the decade. It was founded with great reverence by Jaroslav Opat and duly developed by its researchers. Still, their work had no significant influence on the political discourse of a time where the main political actors were forming their public identities. Apparently there were several attempts at applying Masaryk's ideological legacy within domestic political discourse, but these never met with any visible political success. First there was the "Masarykian inspiration" of the group of former dissidents around Emanuel Mandler, who in the early nineties founded the tiny Liberal Democratic Party (which ceased to exist after the 1992 elections). Then there were the endeavors of former reform communist and renowned Charter 77 signatory Jaroslav Šabata, whose concept of a "new democracy" attempted to infuse the social democratic Left with a combination of ideas from Masaryk, Patočka, and Havel. At the other end of the spectrum, we find the efforts of Miroslav Bednář to put Masaryk's thinking at the service of the New Right.

All these attempts were unsuccessful, as if the vocabulary of Masaryk's humanist ideals had lost their ability to describe the issues and conflicts of post-1989 Czech society, which, we should not forget, was building democracy within an entirely different ideological context. As recently as the 1968 Prague Spring, Milan Machovec had succeeded in writing a book on Masaryk with a real influence on political discourse, as his interpretation of Masaryk became part of a broader range of attempts at a neo-Marxist revision of contemporary politics.² What was possible in

² M. Machovec, *Tomáš G. Masaryk* (Prague: Melantrich, 1968).

1968 could not be done in the 1990s, when, for obvious reasons, the out-moded concept of neo-Marxist revisionism could no longer provide a theoretical framework. Since, however, no eligible theoretical framework was available that might provide a platform for the revival of Czech liberal tradition after the fall of communism (as we will see, not even Havel's vision of civil society could play this role), this tradition died in the embrace of the New Right.

Yet two remarks should be added regarding ideological discourses on liberalism before November 1989 which will not be followed here, although they played their role in ideological transformations during the transition period discussed later in more detail. Firstly, many debates actually took place among dissidents about Masaryk's intellectual heritage in the late communist times, reaching from the philosophical polemic between Jan Patočka and Václav Černý to debates explicitly concerned with the implementation of Masaryk's ideas in defense of dissident activities. Petr Pithart in particular was keen to suggest some sort of legitimization of dissident behavior in terms of the Masarykian concept of the so-called "small-scale work." It was heavily contested by Václav Havel, who then put forward his more existential concept of "non-political politics," which was no less disputed, as it tried to bring together Masarykian moralism with Patočka's Heideggerian way of thinking.³

Secondly, there is no doubt that Czech neoliberals did not fall from the sky in the 1990s, but it is hard to say that there was much continuity in their endeavors from previous times. Admittedly, economic liberals in the 1990s were recruited from different intellectual and professional milieus. Of them, three groups should be mentioned: the old reformist guard from the 1960s like Karel Kouba and Zdislav Šulc, who gradually moved to more radical views about the transformation of socialist economics in debates in which liberalism was achieving ever more space; an unspecified group of theoretical economists who worked in academic institutions in the 1980s: Tomáš Ježek, Josef Zieleniec, Dušan Tříška in the Academy of Sciences and especially Václav Klaus, Vladimír Dlouhý, Karel Dyba, and their director Valter Komárek in the Prognostic Institute; a group of intellectuals that emerged among dissidents like Pavel Bratinka and Daniel Kroupa who pursued some neoliberal ideas within a neoconservative framework and then founded the Civic Institute in November 1989;

³ P. Pithart, *Dějiny a politika. Eseje a úvahy z let 1977–1989* (Prague: Prostor, 1990); M. Znoj (ed.), *Naše současné spory o liberalismus* (Prague: Aleko a Centrum liberálních studií, 1995).

finally, a group of young theoretical economists working in official academic institutions in the late 1980's, who were earlier inspired by Gorbachev's "perestroika," but in the 1990s declared themselves avowed neo-liberals: people like Miroslav Ševčík, who with some of his colleagues from the Prague School of Economics, founded the F.A. Hayek Society just after the November 1989, and then the Liberal Institute.⁴

Václav Havel as an Allegedly False Heir to the Masarykian Tradition

We can learn much about the problematic position of Czech liberal tradition within the victorious liberal coalition in the 1990s by looking at the text presented by Václav Klaus at a conference dedicated to the aforementioned Masaryk jubilee in 2000. At this time Klaus was still the chairman of the lower house of the Czech parliament.⁵ Klaus, a leading figure within the coalition, did not speak of a "defeat of liberalism," nor did he even mention any "differences." Rather, he points out the "dangers" and "unrealistic views" of Masarykian liberalism. He admits that "it was no coincidence that Masaryk was one of the key sources of inspiration in the 1990s," although only "for those who found inspiration at home and not from international contexts" (the latter was the case of the New Right, of which he counted himself a part). Nevertheless, Klaus saw the main problem in the fact that this inspiration "was based more on a superficial and simplistically idealized image of this statesman, and not on his real identity." And this, he remarked, worried him, since "it could lead us astray." There follows a description of what Klaus called the six "myths of Masaryk," which he then undertakes to set straight.⁶ Klaus's six myths are instructive, since they concisely reveal his view of attempts at reviving the Masarykian liberal tradition within the new democracy. According to Klaus, the first myth is that of Masaryk's "ideological neutrality." As we

⁴ Z. Šulc, *Zjeviště i zákulisí české politiky a ekonomiky: vzpomínky novináře a ekonoma 1945–1995* (Prague: Národohospodářský ústav Josefa Hlávky, 2009); P. Husák, *Budování kapitalismu v Čechách. Rozhovory s Tomášem Ježkem* (Prague: Volvox Globator, 1997).

⁵ Václav Klaus, "Masaryk a jeho obraz v dnešní české společnosti" in *T.G.Masaryk. Idea demokracie a současné evropanství. Sborník mezinárodní vědecké konference konané v Praze 2.-4. března 2000* (Prague: Filosofía 2001), 15–18.

⁶ We will leave aside the otherwise important fact that Klaus talks of "myths" and "real identity." We are interested here in an analysis of political discourse, and not the question of the "real" Masaryk. Even Klaus himself said that he would look primarily at "what has survived of Masaryk and what continues to have an appeal today."

will see later, this somewhat confusing term (Masaryk never declared that he was ideologically neutral) has some significance. What Klaus meant was that, within today's political discourse, the Masarykian ideological tradition presents itself as being "outside left and right." According to Klaus however, Masaryk "remained a socialist throughout his entire life, he was ideologically to the left, had difficulties coming to terms with the free market, and underestimated the danger of communism."

The second myth is Masaryk's non-partisanship; Klaus argues that in reality Masaryk was a highly partisan person who "entered politics through the party system," who "even as president was not neutral towards political parties," and "who favored primarily the National Socialists and Social Democrats." At the same time, however, he underrated political parties, since "he placed the role of political parties and parliamentarianism in second place and consciously and purposefully helped to create a system in which all important decisions were initiated within a circle of 'loyal' individuals—the so-called Castle Group." These "myths" give the Masarykian tradition roughly the following characteristics: it is ostensibly ideologically neutral but suspicious of the free market; it underrates the importance of political parties and assigns parliament a second-tier role (because Klaus is its chairman at the time); and ascribes important decisions to a "Castle Group." If we take into consideration the other myths described by Klaus, including "dogmatically conceived European and international visions meant to compensate for the status of a politician from a small country" and "insufficient defense of national interests," then it becomes quite clear who, in Klaus's view, represents this "false Masarykian tradition" in contemporary politics.

At the time, this was precisely how Václav Klaus, the neoconservative Civic Democratic Party (*Občanská demokratická strana*, ODS), and like-minded journalists regularly described the behavior of President Václav Havel. In fact, these words were first used when the Civic Forum (the champion of the November revolution) was splitting up, and the neoconservative ODS was establishing itself in 1991 as the leading force in the country's economic and political transformation. It is during this period that the Czech political vocabulary was established and that we first encounter phrases such as "false neutrality" outside of left and right, "opposition to the free market," "rejection of partisanship," "politics of personality," "Castle Group," and "disregard of national interests" to distinguish the ODS's political enemies from the former Civic Forum, i.e., the Civic Movement. Over time, however, these labels were applied primarily to President Václav Havel and his political allies. In Havel's case, these sins were summarized by the term "non-political politics," and later, this po-

litical group was called the “truth-lovers,” in reference to the idea that “truth and love shall prevail over lies and hatred,” which Havel had declared as the Civic Forum’s motto and which he continued to espouse. (When he was ending his presidential term in 2002, he had a “neon heart” lit up on the Prague Castle as a reminder of this moral and political declaration of faith.)

In summary we may state that, in the eyes of Václav Klaus, the neo-conservative ODS, and like-minded journalists, the Masarykian Czech liberal tradition found continuation within the new democratic circumstances after 1990, and that, even though it had been part of the victorious liberal coalition, it was a hostile tradition that would have to be defeated politically.

The Political Self-Understanding of Masaryk’s Democratism

The post-1989 political scene in which these heirs to the Masarykian tradition found themselves was significantly different from the situation in the interwar First Republic. It is important to briefly familiarize the reader with the nature of this tradition within the First Republic. Without engaging in futile attempts at describing the “real” Masaryk, its main theoretical motifs will be briefly described.

Václav Klaus indicated that Masaryk was a socialist, but Masaryk himself would probably have talked about bringing together the ideas of socialism and individualism, as we know from the humanist ideals that served as his intellectual avowal of faith. Nevertheless, Klaus is not mistaken when he describes Masaryk’s leftist leanings and his critical stance towards the free market. Karel Čapek succinctly summarized this stance towards the free market and economic liberalism with the sentence: “I do not recognize laissez faire—that is not co-action.”⁷ For Masaryk, co-action meant more than cooperation in the market. In his view, the free market was based purely on self-interest, while society should possess some other bonds of affinity than those offered by cooperation based on mutual benefit. Masaryk did not hesitate to call this coefficient of human cooperation a “brotherhood.” His vision of humanist ideals, whose fulfillment he considered to be the natural course of history, can be understood as a rationalized moral theory of brotherhood with certain religious

⁷ K. Čapek, “Masaryk o demokracii” in *Český liberalismus. Texty a osobnosti*, ed. M. Znoj, J. Havránek, M. Sekera (Prague: Torst, 1995), 289.

overtones (referring back to the so called Czech proto-reformation of the fifteenth century when the “Unity of the Brethren” had been established). Brotherhood revealed liberal, democratic, and national aspects throughout history. That history was gradually moving towards the victory of democracy over monarchy was the main thesis of Masaryk’s philosophy of history. It is thus no wonder that Masaryk could hardly base democracy on the free market and on competition among political parties. For him, this was not enough. He wrote: “I accept democracy with all its economic and material consequences, but I base it on love of one’s neighbour—on love and justice, which are the mathematics of love.”⁸ Despite this critique of economic liberalism, Masaryk was not anti-liberal, and despite his religious contemplations regarding the destructive skepticism of the modern era, he was not anti-modernist. In fact, he was a supporter of what may be called social liberalism, which in the British tradition is called New Liberalism. So we may conclude that Masaryk in this sense belongs within the Czech liberal tradition.

Characteristic for this school of Czech liberalism was the conviction that the democratic wave after the First World War involved a political “move to the left.” When Ramsay MacDonald became the first Labor prime minister of Great Britain in January 1924, Masaryk, at the time president of Czechoslovakia, published an article in the weekly journal *Přítomnost* (Presence) with the title “Impromptu historique,”⁹ in which he did not hesitate to associate this event with the death of Lenin. According to Masaryk, the fact that the world’s largest empire, Great Britain, had a socialist government and the largest and most populous country in Europe, Russia, was under communist rule (which was a form of socialism that would democratize itself in the end) proved that history was moving to the left. Masaryk argued that the election of a Labor government in Britain showed that European democracy had a socialist tinge, and that this form of reformist social democracy was possible in other European countries as well.¹⁰

⁸ *Ibid*, 288.

⁹ T.G. Masaryk, “Impromptu historique” in *Cesta demokracie*, Vol. 3 (Prague: Ústav T.G. Masaryka, 1994) 11–12.

¹⁰ Ferdinand Peroutka, the best-known representative of Czech liberalism during the First Republic, also believed that politics were “moving to the left,” and saw things through a similar social-reformist prism. Even during the Second World War, his debates with the communists continued to be held within this ideological framework. See “Why Democracy? Why not Dictatorship?” (1920), “Moving to the Right, or the Left?” (1924), or “Answering the Right and Answering the Left (1946)” in F. Peroutka, *O věcech veřejných*, Vol. 1–2 (Prague: SPN, 1991).

The ideological framework of Masaryk's humanist ideas helped him to identify two political enemies of the democratic republic. One was the threat posed to the republic by the Communist Party. At stake was its relationship to social democracy: Masaryk was optimistic that this threat would eventually disappear as communism reformed itself and took the social democratic path. The second threat was posed by the anti-democratic nationalism of the conservative right. These two antagonistic tendencies influenced the context in which Czech liberal tradition existed at the time. On the one hand, there was the conflict with communism at home and with Bolshevism in Russia. Seen through the prism of Masaryk's democratism, this conflict was presented within the context of the conviction that history was moving to the left. On the other hand was the conflict with the nationalist Right, which was presented as leading to a final victory of democracy over monarchy. In domestic affairs, much of this conflict was centered around the debate as to who contributed more to the creation of an independent Czechoslovakia—domestic politicians (the "Men of October 28") or Masaryk and Beneš's foreign resistance (which had relied on a victory by the Western allies). In foreign affairs, the conflict with the nationalist Right involved the extent to which the Czechoslovak republic should link its future with the development of a system of collective security guaranteed by Britain and France. In these disputes, the opponents of Czech liberalism were not domestic monarchists—there weren't any—but rather the supporters of various forms of authoritarian nationalism, from the liberal nationalists to various proto-fascist versions of nationalism. Especially in the late 1930s, these groups often found a common language in their opposition to Czech liberalism and Masaryk's "Castle Group."

The Revival of Czech Liberalism after 1989 within the Ideological Context of the New Right

Of course, post-communist developments took place under entirely different political conditions. Politics did not move to the left, as Masaryk thought and as would have reflected the ideas of Czech liberalism; instead, history took a turn to the right. The winning liberal coalition moved along this new ideological trajectory, which in the western European democracies had been laid out with the ascent of the New Right in the 1970s and '80s. As a result, Czech liberalism found itself paradoxically revived within the ideological framework of the New Right.

Naturally, the Czech adoption of this ideological framework was influenced by two main historical experiences that Czech society had undergone since the time of the First Republic.¹¹ History had twice proved the progressive optimism of Czech liberalism to be an illusion. Firstly, when the First Republic was destroyed by the rise of authoritarian and fascist regimes in Central Europe (changes that were accepted by England and France until the Munich agreement in 1938). Secondly, when the restored post-war republic was taken over by domestic communists in alliance with Bolshevik Russia. Communism thus did not lead to democratization through reform, but resulted in the Bolshevization of Central Europe. There was also another important factor in the revival of Czech liberalism after the fall of communism, namely the experience of non-violent resistance against communist rule in the 1980s, i.e., the dissident movement and Charter 77. To some extent, the Czech experience of these events fit within the ideological framework offered by the New Right, but it was also partially in conflict with it, as we shall see below.

We can identify several attempts to incorporate the Czech liberal tradition into a modern political platform for use in a new political context. Three such attempts are especially significant. One is Emanuel Mandler's group, previously mentioned, which founded the Liberal Democratic Party in January 1990 and was briefly active in the Civic Forum. Immediately following the June elections however, it split from the Forum and attempted to engage in independent political activities.¹² Another was a part of the Civic Forum that—after the creation of the Klaus-led neoconservative ODS party—founded the Civic Movement (known after 1993 as the Free Democrats) and declared its allegiance to President Havel, expressly identifying itself as a liberal party.¹³ A third attempt involves Václav

¹¹ As a result, it is not enough to study the revival of Czech liberal tradition after 1989 merely as a modular restructuring of core and peripheral concepts of the ideology via the process Michael Freeden labeled de-contestation. This morphological approach is fruitful if an ideology changes against the backdrop of history that has its continuity. Czech history in the twentieth century, however, is marked by several ruptures that render impossible any simple modular restructuring of the concepts found in Czech liberalism. At the same time, the process of de-contestation as contemplated by Freeden is the subject of serious disputes regarding the interpretation of Czech history. See M. Freeden, *Ideologies and Political Theory: A Conceptual Approach* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996).

¹² M. Otáhal, *Opozice, moc, společnost, 1969–1989*, (Prague: Maxdorf, 1994).

¹³ M. Kopeček, "Disent jako minulost, liberalismus jako projekt. Občanské hnutí – Svoobodní demokraté v české polistopadové politice" in *Rozdělení Minulosti. Vytváření politických identit v České republice po roce 1989*, ed. A. Gjuríčová et al. (Prague: Knihovna Václava Havla, 2011), 61–106.

Havel, his supporters, and pundits within the media and academia. Each of these political groupings differed significantly from the others in how they formed their political identity. It is no surprise that these differences were also the result of different interpretations of the Czech historical experiences described above. Mandler's group stood out in particular, but we can find important differences between the Civic Movement and the group centered around President Havel as well. This article focuses only on Havel's attempts to define liberalism, meaning that the image of the Czech liberal tradition offered here is somewhat limited. Nevertheless, Havel's democratic ideology was particularly remarkable and of central importance at its time. It is important to remind ourselves that Václav Klaus, the main representative of the neoconservative Right, calls Masaryk's democratism a false legacy that did not appear "by chance."

Civil Society as Havel's Topic

Put simply, we might say that Masaryk espoused humanist ideals and Havel promoted the theory of civil society. Although there are important differences between the two, there is a certain connection, resulting primarily from the fact that Havel's idea of civil society attempted to move beyond the limited foundations of the dissident experience and towards a democratic political theory with consciously endowed Czech features. Masaryk, in his time, had emphasized the connection between Czech national emancipation and the nation's democratic existence. It is now visible, despite the distinctive differences, that Havel adopted this connection and adjusted it to his time, even with the explicit reference to Masaryk.¹⁴ Thus it is possible to identify essential features of the Czech liberal tradition in terms of three key concepts of social liberalism: 1) individual freedom is understood within the broader context of social solidarity; 2) rights must be more than a formality; they must include social resources and encourage the individual's moral development; and 3) community is an important requirement for the development of individual talents and capabilities.

¹⁴ For example, Havel's speech to Parliament in March 1996, which summarizes his vision of a democracy founded on the concept of civil society, begins with an invocation of Masaryk's vision of democracy. Havel expressly says that "this will be a speech about the Czech Question in the twentieth century." We may thus say that Masaryk formulated the Czech Question in the nineteenth century, and Havel did so in the twentieth. V. Havel, *Projevy a jiné texty z let 1992–1999*, vol. 7, (Prague: Torst, 1999), 566.

Václav Havel was not the first and was not alone. John Keane was one of the first to attempt a resuscitation and redeployment of the concept of civil society within contemporary political theory. He expressly states that his projects on civil society grew out of the theoretical study of how to retrieve the concept of the public sphere from its liberal origins and give it a new democratic sense. At the same time, however, he emphasizes that his research was nurtured by practical commitments, among which he lists firstly the underground universities and citizens' movements founded in communist Czechoslovakia in the 1980s.¹⁵ He thus associates the revival of the concept of civil society with dissidents' attempts at creating a sphere of freedom, not for private enterprise, but for nurturing their civic activities. Andrew Arato and Jean Cohen, who in their book *Civil Society and Political Theory* contributed fundamentally to reviving the discourse on civil society, point out several social contexts in which the new theoretical meaning of civil society was formed. They mention the democratic opposition in communist-era Poland, the ideology of the "New Left" in France, the West German Greens, the role of civil society in the transition away from dictatorships in Latin American, and last, but not least, the civil rights movement in the United States.¹⁶

In this regard, it is hardly surprising that Havel's thinking on civil society was founded on the dissident experience. But it would be a gross error to overlook the fact that Havel developed this concept mainly during the 1990s in an attempt to overcome the limitations of the dissident experience and elaborate a theory that would justify the building of a new democracy. With Havel in such new circumstances, we thus encounter an attempt at democratic political theory, not a defense of the non-political politics of dissent.

One issue that came to the fore only after 1989 was the kind of democracy a capitalist society should have. Although this issue was not considered in the 1980s, the dissident view was not forgotten. In fact, Havel was constantly reproached for it, with criticism leveled particularly on his concept of "non-political politics."¹⁷ Havel had begun using this term during

¹⁵ J. Keane, *Democracy and Civil Society* (London: Verso, 1988).

¹⁶ J. L. Cohen and A. Arato, *Civil Society and Political Theory* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1992).

¹⁷ Later in his memoirs Havel recalls with some bitterness: "The concept of non-political politics connected with me became a popular insult at that time." V. Havel, *Prosím stručně*, (Prague: Gallery, 2006), 20. The theoretical question heavily discussed was mainly if there was a continuation in 1990s of Havel's dissident views from 1980s. See M. Havelka, "Nepolitická politika: kontexty a traduce" in *Ideje, dějiny, společnost* (Brno: CDK, 2010), 316–335. E. Mandler, *Oba moji prezidenti: Václav Havel, Václav*

his dissident days in order to explain the meaning of dissident activities in relation to political power. At that time, he also referred to the ideas of Masaryk, who came up with the idea of non-political politics towards the end of the nineteenth century in order to highlight the importance of activities aimed at strengthening national education and moral awareness outside partisan politics.

Of course, communist-era dissident activities existed for an entirely different purpose and did not involve national awareness and education as interpreted by nineteenth-century rationalist humanists such as Masaryk. In his defense of the dissident existence, Havel came up with an entirely different vision of living in truth inspired mainly by Jan Patočka's existential philosophy, as found in his treatise *The Power of the Powerless*. At that time it was the idea of the anti-systemic moral elite, exposed to the willfulness of worldly systemic power that was captured in this concept. Reminding the public of Masaryk's concept of non-political politics in this regard was just a general nod toward the Czech national tradition. There is no question that life under the Austro-Hungarian monarchy differed fundamentally from life under communist rule, but to recall the history of national resistance against the monarchical power gave the dissident experience an important referential framework.

We can find a similar awareness of the connection with Czech political tradition in the concept of civil society presented by Havel after the fall of communism within the context of the new democracy, although this time he was not pleased to recall his notion of "non-political politics."¹⁸

Undoubtedly the concept of civil society can mean different things within democratic theory. It can be understood as an arena in which citizens develop their social capital and cultivate their sense of society, in other words, where they learn to cooperate, to assume obligations towards others, and to limit their own interests in favor of shared values. As Robert Putnam has shown, without such social capital, democracy wastes away.¹⁹ Characteristically Jürgen Habermas considers civil society as a public place beyond representative constitutional institutions and so extends public reason to the deliberative actions of everyday citizens within civil society. For

Klaus, (Prague: Libri, 2004); B. Doležal, *Nesamozřejmějní politika. Výbor z publicistických statí 1991–1996* (Prague: Torst, 1997).

¹⁸ In fact, Havel denied that the concept of non-political politics had any more meaning for him in the 1990s. V. Havel, "Ztráta paměti?," *Lidové noviny* September 13, 1994.

¹⁹ R. Putnam, *Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2000).

Habermas, it is precisely the free and equal deliberations of such agents that provide the basis for a political legitimization of the state.²⁰ In this way, civil society transforms its “communicative power” into political power and participates in political decision-making. Or more radically, as Chantal Mouffe believes, the civic “siege” of state institutions should not be understood as communicative actions and civic deliberation, but as political conflict. After all, democratic politics in the original meaning of the word are born out of civil society, since it is here that the people can confront their political elites in a way that contrasts sharply with the formalized and institutionalized procedures of high politics.²¹

Václav Havel wrote numerous articles on civil society, but never elaborated any theory. He fruitfully presented this topic for public debate.²² In his 1994 presidential New Year’s address, he presented the thesis that, in building democracy, we had forgotten about civil society.²³ Here, he characterized civil society as the free association of citizens outside the state and the economy. In his view, civil society was primarily the world of civic associations and citizens’ organizations, but it also included public institutions; even local and regional government had its place within civil society. It did not include political parties, however, since these were hierarchical organizations in which citizens joined together in order to obtain political power within the state. Havel believed civil society to be the realm of citizen spontaneity beyond the economic system and the state, highlighting a plurality of values and interests reflecting the diversity of human existence.

Despite the broadness of his ideas, there exist several definitive components of Havel’s concept of civil society: First, the Czech political tradition of social liberalism. Second, some “leftist” ideas about the essential role of civic engagement in the development of democracy, and third, an existential meaning of the “non-political politics” conceived earlier in dissident individualistic terms, and later in more social and democratic ones. All these ideological components underwent a modular restructuring

²⁰ J. Habermas, *Theorie des kommunikativen Handelns*, vols. 1–2 (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1981); J. Habermas, *Faktizität und Geltung* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1992).

²¹ C. Mouffe, *The Democratic Paradox* (London: Verso, 2000).

²² His speech at the Macalester College symposium entitled “The ideas of Václav Havel and the concept of civil society” in Minneapolis/St. Paul, USA (April 26, 1999) may be considered the most elaborate attempt at a theoretical understanding of this concept. Havel, *jiné texty*, 848.

²³ *Ibid*, 172–184.

of their core and peripheral concepts (in the sense proposed by Michael Freedman), which cannot be grasped only in linguistic terms.²⁴ The transformation of the third feature is an especially great puzzle and a broader analysis will be provided below for a clearer understanding.

Moral Populism as a Political Style

Václav Havel used the ideals of civil society to justify the democratic political practice. This democratic practice cannot be fully understood without regard to what might be termed a moral populism. Admittedly, populism is a somewhat disputed and dubious concept within political theory and practice. In contemporary democracies, populism evokes fears that it will subvert the foundations of liberal democratic regimes. In recent years, it has been associated primarily with the rise of anti-liberal and nationalist movements, in particular the “new populism” of the far right.²⁵ Populism is a contentious concept in political theory because it defies systematic theoretical understanding, as it contains too many divergent political phenomena. There is no question that populism has ideological features, but it cannot be defined as an ideology, because it does not contain any of the core concepts found in the political phenomena we tend to consider ideologies. This paper adheres to Margaret Canovan’s definition, which does not attempt to explain populism as an ideology, but rather understands it as a specific political style used by political leaders and mass movements in modern democracies. This political style is characterized by opposition to ruling elites, their values, representative institutions, and the party system that these elites produce. Secondly, it is also characterized by the fact that it “appeals to the people,” because the “ordinary people” know the truth and are the bearers of sovereignty.

The political vocabulary of populism is quite simple and vague, but at the same time full of emotion and enthusiasm, capable of combining conviction with passion.²⁶ Although it is disputable whether the building of a

²⁴ See note no. 10 in this chapter.

²⁵ See, e.g., P. Taggart, *Populism* (Buckingham: Open University Press, 2000).

²⁶ M. Canovan, “Trust the People! Populism and the two Faces of Democracy,” *Political Studies* 47 (1999): 2-16. In her older works, Canovan attempted to systematically understand the phenomenon of populism. One important step was her differentiation between the agrarian populism of pre-modern societies and the populism of modern democracies. Political populism thus includes populist dictatorships, populist democracies, reactionary populism, and politicians’ populism. Havel’s moral populism would thus be a com-

new democracy can be viewed through the prism of populism, it offers a promising perspective, as it opens up new questions and uncovers new issues that depart from established analyses of economic reform or the formation of the constitutional party system.²⁷

The November Velvet Revolution of 1989 would not have happened without some kind of populism. At that time, former dissidents, previously constrained to ghetto-like circumstances and newly led by Václav Havel, placed themselves at the head of a civic movement's rising wave of opposition to communist rule. Faced with a popular revolt, the communist party—which had previously claimed the leading role of state and society—gave up power and entered into negotiations regarding a gradual transfer of power to a new regime. When studying the emergence of new democracies, political scientists focus on the manner in which the authoritarian ruling elite is replaced by a democratic elite, and so encounter phrases such as “roundtables,” “negotiated transfer,” and “collapse of power.” In Czech literature, much ink has been expended debating whether November 1989 was indeed a revolution, let alone whether it was “velvet.”²⁸ Considering the dynamics of populism, we are offered another perspective. A closer look at three typical situations from various periods during this era reveal a picture of a special kind of populism termed “moral populism” because of its emphasis on the role of moral elites.

On the anniversary of the 1948 communist government takeover in February 1990, President Havel appeared at a mass gathering in Old Town Square. He addressed the people from the balcony of the Kinský Palace, the same balcony from which Klement Gottwald had declared the communist victory in February 1948. This emotional speech was formulated using moving contrapositions aimed at the past communist government, but it fluidly transitioned into populist skepticism towards the new representative elites, who appeared to have adopted all the old vices.

“What is the legacy [of communism] that we have inherited?... Our air is unbreathable. Our water is undrinkable. Parents give birth to handi-

bination of politicians' populism with populist democracy. M. Canovan, *Populism* (London: Junction, 1981), 136–281.

²⁷ Václav Žák comes close to such an analysis in his book, although he is focused on the mobilizing and populist features of the neoconservative right in the Czech Republic in the 1990s and so disregards populist features of the democratic revolution itself. See V. Žák, *Rizika mobilizační politiky* (Prague: Český spisovatel, 1997).

²⁸ See in particular journalistic reactions to the book using the term “revolution” in the title of J. Suk, *Labyrintem revoluce. Aktéři, zápletky a křížovatky jedné politické krize (od listopadu 1989 do června 1990)* (Prague: Prostor, 2003).

capped children because they breathe sulfur instead of oxygen and drink petroleum and chloride instead of water. We have demolished or allowed to decay beautiful towns and villages, that marvelous cultural legacy of dozens of generations. In their place, we have covered our homeland with rabbit hutches in which it is impossible to live—only sleep and watch television series.” Thereafter Havel turned directly to the people (“You are the people who rule”), and moved on to criticize the parliament that had elected him president two months earlier:

Since I am already talking about the Federal Assembly, I would like to say one thing. We live in a strange and paradoxical time: We are building the rule of law in a revolutionary manner, so to speak. This emphasis on the law sometimes slows and hinders revolution, while the revolutionary spirit sometimes mocks the law. Unfortunately, there is no other way. ... The only possible way of coming to terms with this paradox without doing greater harm to the national health is to work quickly and intensively. I do not at all understand why our parliament cannot meet permanently in order to find the time to write, properly discuss, and quickly pass the stacks of planned laws. Supposedly because the members of parliament have to get their jobs. Couldn't we contribute to their having a reasonably paid vacation? In our country, there still exists a vestige from the Middle Ages that all civilized countries rid themselves of long ago, namely the death penalty! ... It would take twenty seconds to write up the relevant amendment to the criminal code, and it could be approved by all our representative bodies in one day...²⁹

Then, on the eve of the second anniversary of the fall of communism in November 1991, President Havel, speaking on public television, turned directly to the people, asking them for help in battling politicians—in particular members of parliament—who were incapable of reaching a solution to the political co-existence of Czechs and Slovaks in a shared federation. He sensed that the Czechoslovak federation was facing hard times, and he felt that, instead of resolving the situation, politicians were playing dangerous political games. It was a highly emotional speech. The president declared that the country's regional parliaments were incapable of agreeing on future co-existence within one state. He saw they were politically divided, paralyzed by internal disputes, and dangerously alienated from the public. He said, “As a democrat, I have put my stakes on dialog and the political will to reach an agreement. But these efforts have had almost no impact, and I fear that I have already exhausted my possibilities in this regard.”³⁰ He juxtaposed a “bad” parliament with “good” citizens saying, “I was elected by your representatives based on your will, and I thus feel re-

²⁹ V. Havel, *Projevy z let 1990–1992*, vol. 6, (Prague: Torst, 1999), 73–89.

³⁰ Ibid, 589–593.

sponsible not only to them, but primarily to you.” He turned to the citizens with the challenge:

In the interest of protecting our state from chaos, in the interest of democracy and all the ideals in whose name you rose up against totalitarian power two years ago, I call on you to express, far louder than ever before, your yearning to soon live in a rationally and justly organized and prosperous state, and in this way to help our quarreling parliaments find a way out of the dead end in which they have gotten themselves.

Over the following days, large demonstrations in support of President Havel took place in numerous cities, with the largest such demonstration drawing more than 40,000 people in Prague. Here Václav Havel refused any objection that “he trod on the fragile flower of our democracy,” and he declared on the contrary that “our democracy should be poured on by a vitalizing rain” and “this rain came in the shape of the great upheaval of this public will.” Thereafter he announced that he put forward to the parliament several new law proposals.³¹ The atmosphere was distinctly turned against the federal parliament. The people felt that they were experiencing a return to the time when public words had been immediately transformed into political action. Havel wanted to use this populist impulse, and so he presented the federal parliament with five bills that he called on parliament to quickly discuss and pass. All the proposed laws called for fundamental changes to the constitutional order, and gave the president greater powers at the expense of parliament. The most controversial proposal was the president’s right, under certain conditions, to dissolve parliament and issue presidential decrees.³²

Thirdly, there was a remarkable upsurge in populism inspired by Havel’s concept of civil society towards the end of his term of office. At the time (after the 1998 elections), the political Right did not have enough votes to renew its coalition, but the Social Democrats, who had won the election, were incapable of forming a majority coalition government. In the end, the Social Democrats struck a deal with the strongest opposition party, at that time the ODS, according to which the ODS would support a minority government. Instead of a classic grand coalition, the two main parties’ agreement received the odd moniker of “opposition agreement.” It was a joint deal on government that preserved only the formal role of the opposition.

³¹ Ibid, 594–597.

³² For a more detailed study of the fate of these proposed laws and the details of negotiations regarding the fate of the Czecho-Slovak state, see E. Stein, *Czecho/Slovakia. Ethnic Conflict, Constitutional Fissure, Negotiated Breakup* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1997).

The public responded negatively; the following year, numerous citizens' movements appeared, all of them opposed to this political solution, since they considered it a threat to democracy. Most of these civic associations were inspired by Havel's considerations on civil society, and they declared that the political parties must be controlled by the citizens. One of the first such civic associations was Impuls 99, which was founded in July 1999 when, after months of internal debate, a group of intellectuals loosely associated with Václav Havel issued a public declaration and attempted, in the spirit of Havel's arguments, to start a public debate on the defects of the existing political situation, including ways of rectifying this state of affairs.³³

On the anniversary of the revolution a few months later (November 1999), a group of former student leaders presented a challenge to politicians aptly named "Thank you, now leave." This act was like a shining star on the political firmament. The petition went on to inspire a relatively large wave of social action, and was allegedly signed by some 200,000 citizens. The first demonstration in early December attracted around 60,000 people to Wenceslas Square. However, this citizens' movement, which had managed to put into words the sentiments of a significant portion of the public, gradually fell apart as a result of disagreement over what to do next. Some of its leaders were satisfied with this single protest, while others wanted to found a political party. Although there were several attempts at founding a new party, the results were negligible.

The neoliberal, right-wing ODS took a hard stance against such examples of cultivating popular politics outside the party system and outside the institutions of representative democracy. Amidst its disagreements with such citizens' movements, the party's chairman, Václav Klaus, gave a speech at the tenth party congress in December 1999, in which he stated that one of the party's main objectives since its founding had been to keep society from following what he called "the third way, which would result not in freedom, the market, and democracy, but in non-political politics; a dependence on vaguely defined civic movements, forums, and impulses; the promotion of ambitious utopian projects by intellectuals; few changes to forms of state dirigisme, custodianship, and control; new collectivism; and new ways of limiting hard-earned individual freedoms."³⁴ His chosen terminology—third way, non-political politics, civic movement, utopian,

³³ J. Pehe, "Impuls 99 v kontextu politického vývoje od roku 1998," *Respekt* 13 (2000): 3–4.

³⁴ Speech by Václav Klaus at the 10th ODS congress, 4–5 December 1999, <http://archiv.ods.cz/akce/kongresy/10.kongres/klaus1.html> (accessed December 30, 2013).

and intellectual ambitions (but also dirigisme, collectivism, and liberal freedoms)—all have specific polemical meanings and were used throughout the 1990s when discussing Havel's vision of civil society.

It is hardly surprising that this terminology is the same as the one used by Klaus in his speech at the Masaryk conference in 2000 when he discussed the false legacy of Masaryk's democratism within the new democracy. We can now better understand why Klaus considered the first myth of Masaryk to be party neutrality and appearances of non-partisanship. Although I do not believe that we can call Havel's concept of civil society a continuation of his dissident vision of non-political politics, it is clear that Havel's moral populism involved an aloofness towards established political elites and did not consider competition for votes among political parties to be a guarantee of democracy. It was thus marked by an antipathy towards political parties and an emphasis on the moral responsibility of political elites.³⁵ As a result, the populism that grew out of these views had distinct moralistic and elitist features. We can thus consider this specific Havelian mix of Czech liberal tradition, dissidentism, and the ideas of civil society into one political style to be a *sui generis* moral populism.

Moral Populism as a Moderate Version of Anti-communism

We have now finally come to the conflicts that Havel's concept of civil society helped to identify within the practical discourse of the time. We mentioned some conflicts that captivated Czech liberalism during the First Republic, when the topics of liberalism included the threat to democracy represented by nationalism on the right and the Communist Party on the left. The Czech liberal tradition believed in the possibility of democratic reform in communist Russia and the transformation of the Czechoslovak Communist Party into a constructive party that, instead of negating the democratic republic, would work towards reform in the name of its socialist goals. On the contrary, the democratic revolutions that led to the fall of communism took place within the spirit of anti-communism. Communism was removed from the history of Central Europe in an act that could only be anti-communist. It was a Central

³⁵ It is worth noting that Isaiah Berlin considered one of the essential characteristics of populism to be its apolitical nature, by which he meant that populism develops outside state institutions and its followers believe in society instead of the state. I. Berlin et al, "To define Populism," *Government and Opposition* 3, 2 (April 1968): 173–178.

European version of a turn to the right. As a result, the Right in these countries was generally shaped by two defining issues: anti-communism and economic liberalism. These two concepts went on to define the political playing field on which the main political conflicts took place. In the Czech case, it is instructive to note the extent to which so-called moral populism contributed to the development of anti-communism and to the polemics about economic liberalism.³⁶

Anti-communism first made its voice heard with the call for a second revolution, which became part of the wave of moral populism immediately after the fall of communism. This trend expressed itself more markedly after the June 1990 elections. (Although the communist party lost the election, it nevertheless managed to obtain more than 13% of votes). In August of that year, President Havel gave a speech on the anniversary of the country's occupation in 1968, in which he called for a continuation of the revolution against hidden forms of "communism" in society. The demand for a second revolution becomes the speech's leitmotif:

We today remember 21 August 1968 under strange circumstances, in an atmosphere of general unease, general nervousness, general dissatisfaction with the slow progress that is being made in tearing down the old totalitarian structures which all were put in place by the August invasion. We have had free elections in which an unprecedented percentage of our population participated, we have elected a free parliament, we have a free press, we have a democratic government. But we have not yet managed to deal with the onerous legacy of the totalitarian system. The former regime's power struc-

³⁶ The anti-communism of the right-wing parties is an important topic, but a different one to what we are concerned with here. All political parties on the right were involved with it in one way or another, using it in their political struggle with the left—not just the communist party, but also the Social Democrats and even the liberal Civic Movement, unassociated with the Left. In view of the diverse forms of anti-communism, it is difficult to systematize. We can basically consider the existence two forms: radical non-partisan anti-communism and party-based anti-communism, this latter being used as an instrument in the political conflicts between left and right. As regards the debate about the "third resistance," the resistance against communism, it became important to distinguish reform anti-communism, which viewed communism through the prism of human rights protection (i.e., Charter 77) from militant anti-communism, which emphasized the justification of armed struggle (one such example were the Mašín brothers, who engaged in armed struggle against communism in the 1950s). Ondřej Slačálek offers a somewhat different categorization: he distinguishes between the anti-communism of distance in the 1990s, which expected the communist party to disappear on its own, and the later anti-communism of exclusion, which pushed for legal measures against communism and its contemporary "disguises." O. Slačálek, "Czech anti-communism as an attempt at renewing hegemony," in *Britské listy*, June 22, 2009 <http://blisty.cz/art/47533.html> (accessed December 30, 2013).

tures, which established themselves over the decades, and especially over the past 22 years, continue to exist and to function. In many communities the same people are in power who were in power before. They have ties to the management of economic enterprises. There still exist immense bureaucratic juggernauts preventing rational economic activities on the part of individual enterprises and factories. The old bureaucracy perseveres at all levels, all the way up to the central level of the republic and the federal ministries.... Hiding behind all this are the tentacles of invisible mafias, trafficking with assets that are not theirs, establishing dubious corporations and looking for ways of safely funneling out illegally acquired capital. The dark tentacles of Slušovice are silently permeating our entire food industry.... For most of you, this is certainly nothing new. It is a state of affairs that is generally known, and voices calling for its rectification can be heard from all sides. Again and again, this confirms that our revolution is not complete. Quite the opposite: the main task is still at hand. It is not true that the revolution has failed. It simply has not ended. And no work can be appraised before it is finished.³⁷

The call for a second revolution was taken up by a radical segment of the anti-communist public, certain non-parliamentary parties, citizen initiatives, and like-minded media outlets. From the beginning, it was characterized by an ambivalence towards the new political elite. As Jan Geisler expressed succinctly in the *Metropolitan* newspaper: "Let us be aware that the second phase of the revolution will not be declared by those who declared the first, "velvet," revolution. It must be asserted by the citizens themselves through their engagement and fearlessness. This is also the best way for them to support a solution to the case of Mr. Mareček."³⁸ In fact, the Mareček case would become a milestone in the development of radical anti-communism in its time.

From August to October 1990, Miroslav Mareček filed several criminal complaints against the people responsible for prosecuting him in 1989 (still under the communist regime) because he had distributed a petition known as "Several Sentences." At the time, he held a hunger strike in protest, which was ended by force when he was taken to a hospital and given nutrition. In September 1991, he declared another hunger strike in order to push for a resolution of his criminal complaints. At the same time, he publicly voiced three demands: the investigation and prosecution of those involved in his earlier prosecution; the identification and punishment of the authors of the laws under which he had been prosecuted (in particular the infamous Truncheon Act adopted by the Federal Assembly in February 1989, which enabled the more severe criminal prosecution of

³⁷ Havel, *Projevy 1990–1992*, 243–248.

³⁸ Jan Geisler, "Nebát se a nekrást," *Metropolitan*, March 5, 1992.

“anti-socialist forces”); lastly, the prosecution of those who caused his hunger strike to be forcibly interrupted by the administration of artificial nutrition. Mareček interrupted his first hunger strike after 45 days, when he received a written guarantee from the Czech and federal public prosecutor’s office that they would thoroughly look into and investigate his lawsuits. Nevertheless, Mareček declared another hunger strike in December, which he ended 95 days later on March 30. In a way, it actually ended on March 7 already when a group of activists went to visit him in his hometown of Kyjov. Since there were no signs of life at the house and people had already been discussing his possible martyrdom, the activists called the police, who broke down the door on their request. They found Mr. Mareček in a garden shed, where he had been hiding from them. The doctors measured his blood pressure and pulse and listened to his heart and lungs. All in all, they declared, his state of health was satisfactory.

Mareček’s hunger strike dominated public discourse for at least half a year, having a significant influence on the June 1992 election outcomes, and leading to a radicalization of anti-communist attitudes. We will not take a closer look to these developments here, but it is worth pointing out that this radical anti-communist movement eventually turned away from Václav Havel, who failed to take a clear position on the matter.³⁹

The first important public protest by the “friends of Mareček” was organized on January 16. At first, they protested in front of the general prosecutor’s office in support of “Mareček and a just justice.” That same afternoon, however, they headed for Prague Castle. This was no random decision; they apparently hoped to find support from the leader of the revolution, Václav Havel. When Mareček declared that he was “ready to die,” the myth of a martyr for justice was born. On January 22, a demonstration was held at Prague Castle at which the radical anti-communist front came together: people centered around Petr Cibulka and his *Uncensored News*, the Movement for Civic Freedom, the Anti-Communist Alliance, Bohdan Dvořák’s Club of Active Non-Partisans, John Bok and others. In total, the gathering brought together some 50 people, including two members of the Czech National Council, Josef Šimeček (ODS) and Jaromír Kapusta (from the Movement for Autonomous Democracy–Party for Moravia and Silesia, *Hnutí za samosprávnou demokracii–Společnost pro Moravu a Slezsko*, HSD-SMS). The protestors chanted, “Mareček is dying. Wake up, Václav!” Their appeals to Havel were

³⁹ In more details see M. Znoj, *Marečkův případ aneb vzestup a pád antikomunistické pravice* (Brno: Marek Konečný, 2005).

linked to the idea of Mareček's martyrdom. In the end, the protestors were unsuccessful; Havel did not join them. In a letter to President Havel published the next day, Bohdan Dvořák called on Havel to "answer at least those crying shame below your windows, behind which a presidential reception was going on."

The conflict between Václav Havel and the radical anti-communist Right was escalated by the case of Marián Čalfa, the then-prime minister of the federal government. This time, the stumbling block was Mareček's demand that those who promoted the laws for which he had been prosecuted should be punished, and Marián Čalfa had been the chairman of the government's legislative council under communist rule. At the same time, however, Čalfa had contributed significantly to the Civic Forum's ascension to power and had been the architect of Havel's election as president by the Federal Assembly in December 1989 (by members of the parliament who had been elected under communism). The partly hidden and partly visible "roundtable agreements" had then resulted in his being named to federal prime minister. Since he proved himself in this position, he retained the position even after the first free elections in June 1990, receiving support from Slovakia's Public Against Violence, the leaders of the Civic Forum, and President Havel in particular.

It is no surprise that Marián Čalfa was a thorn in the side of the anti-communist Right: he was a living example of the "unfinished nature of the revolution." In their view, his cooperation with President Havel was a visible failure of the revolution that had to be rectified. Despite the sympathies that Havel occasionally professed for the Mareček case, he did not support demands for Čalfa's dismissal and parted ways with the radical anti-communism of the second revolution. This is when the theory of Havel's betrayal of the revolution was born, made infamous in particular by the conspiracy theory published in 1991 by Miroslav Dolejší under the title "An Analysis of November 17,"⁴⁰ which claimed that the transfer of political power in November 1989 had been agreed upon in advance between representatives of Charter 77 and an "inside group" within the communist leadership, not to mention between Russia and the USA.

Nevertheless, Havel did not give up on the idea of a second revolution. In the 2000s he returned to this idea after becoming disappointed with the development of democracy in the Czech Republic and other Central European countries. Havel reflected upon this idea in his memoirs, published

⁴⁰ M. Dolejší, *Analýza 17. listopadu*, <http://www.analyza.wz.cz/> (accessed December 30, 2013)

in 2006 under the title *Briefly, Please*, although he now said that it was up to the new, younger generation to lead the “second generation of revolutions,” as he called it, in order to correct the mistakes of the original revolutions, which had been too burdened by the communist past. Here, he clearly uses the vocabulary of radical anti-communism to describe the post-communist era. “It is a period of unprecedented rapid and massive privatization that has yet to be controlled by a solid and well-established framework—a situation that the former communist nomenclature and communist company management have, of course, been a party to. These people have the relevant information and contacts, as a result of which they have evolved into the core, or at least a significant part, of the new entrepreneurial class.”⁴¹ In Havel’s reflections, the idea of a second revolution is thus associated with the concept of mafia capitalism, which represented one of the critical aspects of his disputes with the neoliberal paradigm of the new era.

Moral Populism in the Conflict with Neoliberalism

In its day, the Czech liberal tradition had been strongly influenced by the conflict with the nationalist Right. But the nationalist Right was not the main subject of Václav Havel’s political arguments in favor of civil society. At the outset, the far Right was weak and had no important role in public discourse, with the possible exception of Miroslav Sládek’s Republican Party, which, after managing to get elected to parliament, engaged in constant, indiscriminate, and crude attacks on President Havel.⁴² In the 1990s, the anti-European nationalist Right continued to hold a moderate stance and rarely criticized the European Union, since EU accession was a generally accepted objective that was more or less shared by the entire political elite and had the support of a clear majority of society. Disagreements erupted just after the Czech Republic’s accession to the EU, primarily out of fear that EU membership might pose a threat to the national identity. The main focus of the political clash between Václav Havel and the neoconservative ODS involved the neoliberal paradigm in whose name Czech society had been transformed into a democracy. In this

⁴¹ Havel, *Prosím stručně*, 20.

⁴² These attacks reached their peak when Havel was elected president in 1993: Sládek was detained by the police and the Republican Party’s members of parliament tried to dis-parage Havel during the election any way they could.

regard, the concept of a civil society allowed Havel from the beginning to point out the neoliberal paradigm's limitations and deficiencies in developing democracy. Over time, Havel's attitudes within this debate became more radical. Although he always voiced his criticism of the neoliberal paradigm, he had originally indicated that he was talking about "adding to," "completing," and "strengthening" the things that were done in the course of building democracy.

It was within the context of this debate that Havel introduced the subject of civil society into political discourse in the aforementioned 1994 New Year's address. Immediately thereafter, Prime Minister Václav Klaus entered the debate, uncompromisingly declaring, "Here begins another round of debate on the question of a society of free citizens against the misleading idea of a so-called 'civil society.'"⁴³ Klaus had a clear vision of a neoliberal economy combined with a strong authoritarian state that guarded the mechanisms of the free market. He understood "society of free citizens" within the neoliberal context of a "market economy without attributes," as he called it. At the same time, he declared himself the defender of the basic liberal ideas of the free market and a multi-party system. These neoliberal arguments had no room for civil society beyond the level of private organizations. Although this debate did not begin until 1994, Václav Klaus had expressed his indignation at citizens' groups and public institutions that hoped to exercise political influence as early as 1991, when the neoconservative ODS was establishing itself on the political scene.⁴⁴ Now he took an explicit stand against "the misleading idea of civil society."

Havel, on the other hand, continued to think in terms of "adding something to" the new democracy. In his previously mentioned speech to Parliament in March 1996, Havel spoke about "completed tasks" on the one hand and remaining "debts" on the other. As we have already seen these debts involved a strengthening of democracy in the Masarykian sense of a "civic way of life." It was not until his famous 1997 speech to both chambers of Parliament at the Rudolfinum⁴⁵ that he adopted a confrontational

⁴³ Václav Klaus, "Snahy o hledání třetí cesty stále nekončí," *Lidové noviny* March 7, 1994.

⁴⁴ In this regard, Václav Klaus took an even more radical standpoint than the well-known statement by Margaret Thatcher that she knows only individuals and the state. Klaus took a firm stand against the idea that civic associations, professional societies, and unions should have any political influence. "The state must not allow any private individual to interfere in public and political decisions." V. Klaus, "Soukromé, veřejné a státní," *Český deník*, December 4, 1992.

⁴⁵ The location was symbolic, since it was the seat of the First Republic's parliament.

tone lamenting the current state of democracy, even though he used neutral terms, describing the country's "first face" and "second face." The first face was the everyday life of citizens, and was vigorous and productive; the second face was a gloomy one. According to Havel, Czechs felt that

again, the people in power cannot be trusted, that they are more interested in their own benefit than in the public interest; many people are convinced that honest businessmen fare poorly while fraudulent profiteers are given the green light. There is a prevailing conviction that it pays to lie and steal, that many politicians and government officials are corrupt, and that even though all political parties offer beautiful words as to their honorable intentions, they are all secretly manipulated by shady financial groups...⁴⁶

It is in this context that we first hear the words "bad mood" being used to describe this gloomy face of society. Gradually, however, people began to use the term "mafia capitalism," which Havel introduced also at the time.

It is in this spirit that Havel described the results of the economic transformation in his October 2000 Statehood Day speech:

Over the course of ten years of economic transformation, hundreds of billions have mysteriously disappeared from many companies and banks, and billions have not been paid in taxes. All the while—and this is the worst thing—it seems that almost no one has been jailed or prosecuted for this. Who knows... perhaps some of these individuals who have funneled money into tax havens even enjoy the silent admiration of the people around them. Who is it that does not pay their debts, and who hires people to murder their creditors? And who among those who should be an example to others, meaning the leaders of the political parties, deny their own financial machinations with a casual smile?⁴⁷

Of course, Havel never restricted his use of the phrase "mafia capitalism" to the imperfect democracy in the Czech Republic. From the beginning, he gave this expression a more general meaning, even applying it to democracies in developed Western societies. In an article published in 2004 on the 15th anniversary of the fall of communism, he speaks generally of a crisis in Western democracy:

Perhaps we are merely witnessing a paradigm shift brought about by new technologies, meaning that there is no reason to worry. But perhaps the problem is deeper: Multina-

⁴⁶ Havel, *Projevy 1992–1999*, 733–753.

⁴⁷ V. Havel, *Projev prezidenta republiky Václava Havla ke státnímu svátku České republiky* (Prague, October 28, 2000), <http://old.hrad.cz/president/Havel/speeches/> (accessed December 30, 2013).

tional corporations, media cartels, and powerful bureaucracies are increasingly reshaping political parties into organizations that are no longer primarily interested in the public good, but in protecting clientelist networks and interest groups. Politics is becoming nothing more than the realm of lobbyists, the media trivialize problems, and democracy frequently looks like merely a virtual game for consumers instead of a serious matter for earnest citizens.

Nevertheless, Havel only rarely extends the concept of mafia capitalism to describe the state of democracy in Western societies. For the most part, he uses this phrase to describe the state of the new, post-communist democracies. Already in his 1997 Rudolfinum speech, he had spoken of a “post-communist morass that, to varying extents and in various forms, befell all the countries that threw off communism.”⁴⁸

As Havel took an increasingly disapproving attitude towards the manner in which the new Central European democracies functioned in reality, his concept of mafia capitalism grew more radical. His 2006 memoirs contain a quite critical passage, in which he links the subject of mafia capitalism with the idea of a second revolution.

Something is taking shape that I at one point called mafia capitalism or that could be called mafia democracy. ... This post-communism takes a different form in each country that threw off communism, but few countries have avoided it altogether. As the years pass and new generations come of age, the public begins to slowly lose patience with this state of affairs. And one day, they will rise up. And then we will see a second generation of revolutions, or more precisely a postlude to the original revolutions. Their aim will be to settle accounts not directly with communism, but with its successor—post-communism.

Havel describes how diverse these postludes might be. “One form may be a surprise shift in voting preferences (Slovakia’s reckoning with Mečiarism), another may be peaceful pressure by popular demonstrations (Georgia, Ukraine).”⁴⁹ These statements boggle the mind. How can one possibly consider the 1998 replacement of Vladimír Mečiar by Mikuláš Dzurinda as the head of government (or the “Orange Revolution” in Ukraine or the “Rose Revolution” in Georgia) to be a second revolution that put an end to mafia capitalism, when each new government suffered no fewer corruption scandals than their predecessors? One possible explanation is that Havel made these conclusions from the viewpoint of a discourse on civil society, mafia capitalism, and a second revolution. Conse-

⁴⁸ V. Havel, “Z listopadu se můžeme poučit,” *Hospodářské noviny*, November 16, 2004.

⁴⁹ Havel, *Prosím stručně*, 20.

quently we can conclude that this combination of anti-communism and anti-liberalism within one political vision expressed the disillusionment with new Eastern European democracies, in effect, it became more of an obstacle to identifying relevant political conflicts between left and right, nevertheless enabling people to understand the situation in which they live.

Czech liberalism had once been a member of the ideological family of social liberalism. Its core concepts undoubtedly included freedom, community, social justice, and rule of law. During the First Republic, this led to conflicts with the nationalist Right and the involvement of the communist party to defend democracy and the nation-state founded on a conviction shared by progressives that the world was moving to the left. In the end, history showed this to be a tragic mistake. Later, the fall of communism did not bring about a return to the progressive illusions of Czech liberalism. Instead, certain ideas of Czech liberalism were revived within the framework of the concept of civil society. This concept, however, proved incapable of withholding the conflict with the neoconservative Right and gave a boost to populist anti-communism as part of the conviction that the world was moving to the right. Vaclav Havel pushed this concept further in that direction away from his "leftist" dissident times and in accordance with the *Zeitgeist*, along the lines of the Project for the New American Century made up by American neoconservatives. The emphasis on civil society got bogged down by disillusioned lamentations over the country's poor state of affairs, even though once it actually had helped release the creative force of the people, who then managed to liberate themselves from communist rule. However, the political conflicts with which Havel engaged as part of his defense of civil society left it depleted. As a result, neoliberalism and the nationalist Right could easily dominate the public debate in the building of democracy.⁵⁰

⁵⁰ One can then understand the criticism of John Keane who saw in late Havel the failure of his own original hopes for revival of civil society in Central Europe. See J. Keane, *Vaclav Havel: A Political Tragedy in Six Acts* (London: Bloomsbury Press, 1999).

The (Re-)Emergence of Constitutionalism in East Central Europe

PAUL BLOKKER

The ideas of rule of law and constitutionalism are by now part and parcel of any process of democratization around the world. This was most certainly also the case with the radical transformations that occurred in East Central Europe (ECE) around the year 1989. A good part of these were about legal and constitutional changes, and about the institutionalization of a new political and economic order on the basis of the ideas of the rule of law and of constitutionalism. While it seems difficult to think about modern democracy without also invoking these ideas, it is at the same time crucial to recognize that there is very little that is natural about the emergence of rule of law and of the idea of a democratic political order grounded in a constitution. In other words, the legal and constitutional nature of the transformations in East Central Europe needs careful scrutiny, and attention must be paid to both internal and external sources of legalism and constitutionalism. There is nothing irrevocable about the institutionalization of a democratic regime grounded in the rule of law and constitutionalism (as both Hungary and Romania in 2012 testify so clearly), nor should we assume that these ideas take the same form everywhere (as revealed by different emphases in the institutionalization of constitutional democracy in the region).

All these observations support a comparative and historical analysis of the (re-) emergence of constitutionalism in East Central Europe since the moment of change. Particularly interesting contributions to this endeavour have tried to probe the complexity of the emergence of constitutionalism since 1989 and the political conflicts, difficulties of transitional justice, and different traditions and ways of perceiving constitutional democracy that have been part of the construction of constitutional democratic systems.¹

¹ See, in particular, G. Skąpska, *From 'Civil Society' to 'Europe': A Sociological Study on Constitutionalism after Communism*, (Leiden: Brill, 2011); B. Puchalska, *Limits to Democratic Constitutionalism in Central and Eastern Europe* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2011); J. Přibáň, *Legal Symbolism: On Law, Time and European Identity* (Aldershot, UK/Burlington, USA: Ashgate, 2007); as well as P. Blokker, *Multiple Democracies in Europe: Political Culture in New Member States* (London: Routledge, 2010).

This chapter will follow a comparative, historical, and sociologically informed approach. The chapter will start with a brief discussion of the role of constitutionalism in communist regimes. Subsequently, it will provide a narrative of how and why a legalistic form of constitutionalism emerged in the region from 1989 onwards, and what kinds of constitutional traditions were involved in this process. Finally, the chapter will explore whether traditions differing from liberal and legal constitutionalism have played a role in the transformation, exploring in particular democratic and communitarian approaches to constitutionalism.

Constitutions During Communist Times

The “socialist legality” that underpinned the political structure of communist regimes was based upon “paper constitutions” that had very little to do with rule of law (in either a procedural or substantive sense) and were rather fictional or a form of symbolism (in a pejorative sense) that displayed a huge discrepancy with the arbitrary nature of political-legal reality.² As mentioned by Aleksander Smolar regarding the case of Poland, “The 1952 Constitution does not reflect the real political organisation of society, nor are the rights it guarantees the ones that are genuinely assured. The legislators did not intend the Constitution to be normative nor to define the limits of authority and methods of control over it by society, nor even to defend the authorities against their enemies.”³ However, “[t]he Constitution, bearing no relation to reality and having no influence upon it, created a reality *sui generis* as all-embracing as the one experienced by society”⁴ (More on this virtual symbolic reality below).

But in other ways, it can also be argued that the communist constitutions and legal orders *did* play a role in the communist systems. As András Sajó has argued, “[i]n order to be an effective means of building socialism, law must conform with the ideals of socialist legality. To a surprising extent the socialist systems of Eastern Europe were legalistic societies though the meaning of law may have been different from that generally understood by western scholars.”⁵ The law, including constitutional

² Skapska, *From ‘Civil Society’ to ‘Europe.’*

³ A. Smolar, “The Protest Movement in Poland,” *Index on Censorship*, 6, 8 (1977): 8–12.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 9.

⁵ A. Sajó, “New Legalism in East Central Europe: Law as an Instrument of Social Transformation,” *Journal of Law and Society* 17, 3 (1990): 330–331

law, had a dual nature: on the one hand, the law could be used to exercise terror and to persecute enemies of the communist project, but, on the other, the law could equally be used “as an engineering tool in the pursuit of social welfare.” As argued by Markovits, “[t]he fact that the Party could choose whether to use the law for benign or repressive purposes made the normative state vulnerable to attacks from its prerogative counterpart.”⁶ In this, then, it could be argued that while “paper” communist constitutions helped to enhance existing traditions of “us and them,” meaning a deep distrust of society against the ruling elites, there was at the same time some attempt at creating order and social integration around a positive constitutional dimension in the form of aspirations and social rights. In other words, the law was like two laws: “the law of political repression and that of ordinary daily life.”⁷

Communist constitutions followed the original Stalinist model of 1936⁸ in a fairly uniform way. András Sajó, “[i]n East Central Europe socialist law was understood as a system closely following the example of the Soviet law.”⁹ The constitutions of the East Central European countries all clearly reflected the dominant ideology of communism, which served as a justification for the entire political and economic order of the communist regimes, and the dominant role of the communist party as the ultimate authority in communist systems. In external terms, the constitutions also conveyed close relations (usually termed “friendship”) with the Soviet Union.¹⁰ For instance, the *capitol introductiv* of the Romanian Constitu-

⁶ I. Markovits, “The Death of Socialist Law?,” *Annual Review of Law and Social Science* 3 (2007): 233–253; 238.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 237.

⁸ The Stalinist Constitution of 1936 can itself be understood as an important turning point in that it rehabilitated both the state and law in socialist ideology. Whereas before, the main relationship between the socialist ideal and the law had been the insight that the latter would wither away (with the state) because of the increasing realization of the former, the 1936 Constitution explicitly recognized the role of the state and the law in realizing the socialist utopia. This new legalist view was justified through the idea of ‘socialism in one country.’ See Markovits “The Death of Socialist Law?,” 235.

⁹ I do not mean to imply that no diversity existed; in fact, great diversity existed between the systems, not least between the Soviet Union and the East-Central European countries. In the latter, ‘because, among other things, of the different legal and cultural traditions, law remained somewhat closer to the western civil tradition’ (Sajó “New Legalism in East Central Europe,” 331.). What is more, important changes can be identified in national constitutional trajectories, such as in Poland in the 1970s and 80s, or in Czechoslovakia in 1968. There is, however, limited room here to pursue these matters further.

¹⁰ Skapska, *From ‘Civil Society’ to ‘Europe,’* 81.

tion of 1952 states: "The external politics of the Romanian People's Republic consists of a politics which defends peace as well as friendship and alliance with the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics and with other people's democracies, a politics of peace and friendship with all peace-loving peoples."¹¹ The preamble of the (amended) Hungarian constitution of 1949 stated: "The working people, with the friendly assistance of the Soviet Union, reconstructed the war-torn country which was lying in ruins."¹²

The Stalinist constitutions had a logic largely diverse from Western, liberal constitutionalism in at least two senses. First of all, Stalinist constitutions were of a declaratory as well as an inspirational kind. These constitutions declared the scientific superiority of the socialist project as well as invoked specific state goals that were to be met. Stalinist constitutions thus included most importantly references to Marxist ideology, the vanguard role of the party, and the international community of communist states. Arjomand includes Stalinist constitutions in what he calls the type of "ideological constitutions," a category based on the belief that "constitutions [were] instruments of social transformation according to total ideologies ..., [and] marked by the subservience of a narrowly conceived rule of law and legality to the dominant ideology of the regime."¹³ In Guenther Frankenberg's terms, communist constitutions were plan or program constitutions, which "translate the 'laws of scientific socialism' and historical materialism into ideological blueprints for socioeconomic and political-cultural development. From a higher-law viewpoint they are dismissed as 'façade constitutions.'"¹⁴

In this, the constitutions contained clear justifications for the new (international) communist order, and explicitly criticized the old order. Thus the Romanian constitution of 1952 reads "the Romanian People's Republic was born in the wake of the historical victory of the Soviet Union over German fascism and the liberation of the Romanians by the glorious Soviet Army, a liberation which has given power to the working people, headed by the working class [in itself] led by the Communist Party, has

¹¹ Romanian Constitution 1952. My translation.

¹² Hungarian Constitution 1975.

¹³ S.A. Arjomand, "Law, Political Reconstruction and Constitutional Politics," *International Sociology* 18, 1 (2003): 7–32.

¹⁴ G. Frankenberg, "Comparing constitutions: Ideas, ideals, and ideology—toward a layered narrative," *International Journal of Constitutional Law* 4, 3 (2006): 439–459, 453; G. Frankenberg, *Autorität und Integration: Zur Grammatik von Recht und Verfassung* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 2003), 9.

struck down the fascist dictatorship, has annihilated the power of the exploitative classes and founded the people's democratic state, which fully corresponds with the interests and needs of the popular masses in Romania."¹⁵ The preamble of the amended Hungarian Constitution of 1949 stated:

A new era of our history commenced when the Soviet Union... liberated our country from fascist oppression and opened the way toward democratic development for the Hungarian People... The Constitution of the Hungarian People's Republic is the expression of the basic changes carried out in the life of our country, of the historic results of the struggle for social progress, and of the efforts to build a new country.¹⁶

The declaratory nature also included an extensive catalogues of rights, not least social rights, such as the right to work and the right to housing. Despite these extensive references, the constitutions were not juridical constitutions. Rights were not understood as entitlements of citizens against the state but rather as granted by the party-state, and therefore subject to the arbitrary interpretation by the communist party apparatus.¹⁷ Also, rights were interpreted within the context of communist ideology and could therefore not be invoked against the communist goals of the regime. For instance, in the Romanian constitution of 1965, Article 28 grants the "citizens of the Romanian Socialist Republic... freedom of speech, press, meeting, association and demonstration." In Article 29 it is stated that these freedoms "cannot be used with aims that are hostile to socialist ordinances or the interests of the workers..." The amended Hungarian constitution (1975) stated: "The rights of the citizens in the Hungarian People's Republic shall be exercised in accordance with the interests of socialist society" (Art. 54:1). In other constitutions, such as the Czechoslovak one of 1960, similar delimitations were included.¹⁸ The latter stated, "The rights, freedoms, and duties of citizens ... serve both the free and all-round development and expression of the personality of the citizens and, at the same time, the strengthening and development of the socialist society" (Art. 19:1, Czechoslovak Constitution 1960). But even such limited socialist legality was not guaranteed in that the actual constitutional text did not provide the basis for court rulings or any other form of legal certainty, but was instead open to the interpretation of the communist party elites who provided the ultimate reading of the consti-

¹⁵ Romanian Constitution 1952.

¹⁶ Hungarian Constitution 1975.

¹⁷ Skąpska, *From 'Civil Society' to 'Europe'*.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 85.

tutional principles. What is more, the invocation of one's constitutionally enshrined civil rights was always risky in that one could be classified as an "enemy of socialism."¹⁹

Second, the main function of Stalinist constitutions included that of social guidance. Communist constitutions were supposed to lead the way through the various stages of development towards the ultimate communist goal. As Frankenberg argues:

They offer a frame of reference for political unity and collective identity, and they mirror and project stages of progress along the guidelines provided by Karl Marx, V. I. Lenin, Mao Tse-tung, and other such authorities. Moreover, program constitutions tend to become obsolete and need revision, once the ruling cadres decide, on the basis of their superior insight into the laws of development and the authoritative scriptures, that a certain developmental stage has been reached.²⁰

In the ultimate instance, the communist constitutions should contribute to the creation of the "Soviet man," a member of communist society "liberated" from ethnic, religious, or other social ties and fully in the service of the communist state.²¹

The Rights Revolution of 1989

The changes that accelerated in 1989 (but had been maturing for at least a decade) were in part the outcome of claims for taking seriously the existing constitutional arrangements. As interestingly argued by Smolar, the constitutional claims that for instance emerged in 1976 in Poland were informed by a "surreal" understanding of the constitution (as opposed to a "real" understanding), in which the sovereignty, independence, and the democratic and rights-based dimensions of socialist constitutionalism were taken seriously.²²

It can then be argued that an important part of the struggle against communism had been based on a legal language of rights and the invocation of the existence of such rights in a formal sense against the abuses of the political regime. It was in particular Charter 77 in Czechoslovakia that

¹⁹ Frankenberg, *Autoritaet und Integration*, 85–6.

²⁰ G. Frankenberg, "Comparing constitutions: Ideas, Ideals, and Ideology: Toward a Layered Narrative," *J-CON* 4, 3 (2006): 453–454.

²¹ Skapska, *From 'Civil Society' to 'Europe'*, 82

²² Smolar, "The Protest Movement in Poland," 9.

had started to use the language of rights in order to contest the illegitimate nature of political practices of the communist regime. In the original declaration of Charter 77, the adherence to the Helsinki Act of 1975 by the incumbent regime was welcomed, but at the same time the validity was denounced as only existing on paper.²³

In the Hungarian case, a prominent promoter of a rights discourse was the group of intellectuals around the samizdat journal *Beszélő*. The journal followed primarily a liberal legalist strategy based on fundamental rights and the notions of *Rechtsstaat* and pluralism. This was formulated by János Kis, one of the most prominent dissident voices in Hungary, as the “idea of dual mobility, both in the sphere of public law towards the constitutional state and the sphere of civil law towards pluralism.”²⁴ Kis argued in *Beszélő* against the “legal anarchy” of the communist regime, as “[t]his practice destroyed the public mores of political life and has started to eat away private morals as well. One of our very first tasks is to make it understood that only people who are conscious of their rights and ready to defend them may become citizens with self-respect.”²⁵

Also in Poland the rights language played an important, even if slightly less primary, role²⁶ in the discourse of what can be regarded as the most important and visible dissident movement in the region, *Solidarity*. In the Thesis 23 of its 1981 program, a document which is generally referred to as the “Self-Governing Republic,” *Solidarity* stated, “[The] legal system must guarantee basic civic freedoms, [and] respect principles of equality of all citizens and all institutions of public life before the law.”²⁷ And, earlier, in a protest letter against constitutional amendment (the famous letter of 59), Polish intellectuals and others, including Adam Michnik, argued:

²³ V. Havel et al., “Charter 77 Declaration” in *The Power of the Powerless: citizens against the state in Central-Eastern Europe*, ed. J. Keane (London : Hutchinson, 1985), 217–221.

²⁴ J. Kis, *Politics in Hungary: For a Democratic Alternative* (Boulder, Colorado: Social Science Monographs, 1989), 125.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 121, 123; B.J. Falk, *The Dilemmas of Dissidence in East-Central Europe: citizen intellectuals and philosopher kings* (Budapest–New York: CEU Press, 2003); A. Bozóki, “Preparing for the Revolution? The Dissident Intellectuals Before 1989,” available at: http://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=1450295.

²⁶ Baker for instance argues that an emphasis on civil liberties and human rights was a ‘by-product’ rather than priority in Michnik’s strategy of ‘new evolutionism,’ G. Baker, “The Changing Idea of Civil Society: Models from the Polish Democratic Opposition,” *Journal of Political Ideologies* 3, 2 (1998): 129.

²⁷ Cited in: J. Kurczewski and B. Sullivan, “The Bill of Rights and the Emerging Democracies,” *Law and Contemporary Problems* 65, 2 (2002): 257.

The right of all citizens to nominate and elect their representatives in free, democratic elections must be assured. The courts must be guaranteed their independence of the executive, and Parliament must effectively be given the highest legislative power. We believe that disregard for civil rights can lead to the destruction of the collective will, the crumbling of social cohesion, a gradual loss of national identity, and in the end can destroy the national tradition. It poses a threat to the nation's very existence.²⁸

Admittedly, already in the 1960s protesters in the Soviet Union had called for a “respect for the constitution.” The rights language proved an important means of dissent, as it was invoked not only in the more rebellious societies (Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Poland), but also in an extremely closed society such as the post-1971 Romania of Nicolae Ceaușescu. Here were, among others, the writer Paul Goma as well as the historian Vlad Georgescu who invoked human rights in a protest against the regime. Goma argued against “this lack of fundamental rights, this derision of man, this shamelessness of lies—everywhere. Everywhere: poverty, economic chaos, demagoguery, insecurity, terror.”²⁹ And Georgescu directly invoked the Romanian Constitution in his writings, and argued that the “Romanian dissent recognizes the Constitution of the country and asks for nothing but its firm keeping, in its spirit and letter.”³⁰

As Jiří Příbáň has argued, the rights dimension to the dissident discourse was a crucial dimension in the struggle against totalitarianism and “paper” or “surreal” constitutions in Czechoslovakia and Hungary. This phenomenon took a different form in Poland and, as we have seen, was more isolated in Romania and other societies. Indeed, “[t]he basic strategy of the Czechoslovak dissidents was to exploit the distance between the concept of socialist legality and political reality.”³¹ Příbáň speaks about the “double language” of dissidents, in that they pursued a legalist strategy, emphasizing that the communist regime should live up to its superficial claim to legality and the rule of law. This strategy was closely related to a second, moral

²⁸ Letter of 59, “Poland: Protests,” *Index on Censorship* 5 (1976): 75.

²⁹ P. Goma (2009) [1979], *Culoarea Curcubeului '77*, Autura Autorului, http://paulgoma.free.fr/paulgoma_pdf/pdf/LRP_Culoarea_si_Barbosul.pdf (Accessed December 14, 2014), my translation; see also M. Stănescu, “Despre dizidență în România comunistă (1977–1989)” in *Sfera Politicii*, 106 (2004), 39–47.

³⁰ A.M. Cătănuș, “A Case of Dissent in Romania in the 1970’s: Paul Goma and the Movement for Human Rights,” *Totalitarianism Archives (Arhivele Totalitarismului)* 34 (2011): 189–90.

³¹ J. Příbáň, *Dissidents of Law: on the 1989 velvet revolutions, legitimations, fictions of legality, and contemporary version of the social contract* (Aldershot: Ashgate/Dartmouth, 2002), 166.

strategy, in which it was not the rule of law that was invoked, but more importantly a particular, substantive idea of the rule of law. This idea was inextricably related to distinct values, according to the dissidents, in particular those enshrined in human rights. This emphasis on human rights as sacred and inviolable was then the starting point for a possibility for people to experience autonomy and authenticity, what Havel called to “live in truth.”

The Legal Revolution of 1989

The deep changes at the end of the 1980s could be seen in terms of a rights revolution, or, in slightly different terms, as the culmination of a spun out process in which the notion of human rights gained an ever more normative foothold in the communist societies, reflected in both the language of the dissident movements, as seen above, and in the declarations and actions of the communist regimes. As expressed by Irena Grudzińska-Gross, the legal and constitutional changes from above in the 1970s ultimately brought about the “gradual change that permitted the peaceful and orderly transitions of 1989.”³²

The changes of 1989 displayed another legal dimension which equally referred to the rule of law. But rather than a substantive view emphasising the protection of individual rights, it followed the legal-positivistic doctrine of legal continuity. In other words, the notion of legal revolutions reflects the idea that the comprehensive and in many ways systematic changes in 1989 were to be somehow managed within the limits of the existing constitutional and legal rules. The most clear-cut case was probably that of Hungary. As argued by Péter Paczolay, “[T]he consciously chosen Hungarian way was through so-called ‘constitutional revolution,’ which means the choice of law instead of power, not only for the future political system, but also as the basis for the mode of transition.”³³ It is in this light not surprising that the Hungarian constitutional trajectory was until very recently (1 January 2012) defined by legal and constitutional continuity with the communist constitution of 1949 (Law XX).

Such a legal or constitutional revolution was made possible by the intricate changes in the communist regimes since the 1970s, in which com-

³² I. Grudzińska-Gross, “Introduction: When Polish Constitutionalism Began,” *East European Constitutional Review*, 6, 2/3 (1997): 65.

³³ P. Paczolay, “Constitutional Transition and Legal Continuity,” *Connecticut Journal of International Law* 8 (1993): 560.

munist parties had tried to enhance their ever more problematic legitimacy vis-à-vis larger society by means of reference to (international standards of) legality. This strategy had been initiated in the Soviet Union, but as an unintended side effect “allowed” dissident movements in the Soviet bloc countries to emphasize a legalist discourse which brought out into the open the dualist stance of the communist regimes, i.e., on the one hand a formal, declaratory adherence to international standards of human rights and constitutionalism, and, on the other, on-going political abuse of the rights of dissenters and other citizens.

A widely accepted way of approaching the transformative moment of 1989 was that of accepting the idea of legal continuity, and therefore the attempt to revolutionize the political orders from within by preserving and using the constitution rules of revision of the constitutions of the old communist order.³⁴ This is, as Andrew Arato has pointed out, an original choice in a context in which past institutions had little to offer to political forces that wanted to install some kind of liberal-democratic constitution order. The Stalinist constitutions of communist times could hardly be taken as sources of inspiration for a genuine constitutional regime, in that the communist constitutional framework had been more or less completely delegitimized by the practice of political abuse, arbitrariness, and dominance of discretionary power. Also the pre-communist times can be said to have had little to offer to constitution-makers in 1989. Any restoration would have brought with it a range of complications in terms of legal rupture and legitimacy, not to speak of the anachronistic nature of any pre-communist constitutional order.³⁵ The emphasis on legal continuity was then above all an attempt to create an orderly transition, or a “self-limiting revolution,” that would result in a complete, revolutionary revision of the existing institutions without legal rupture or vacuum. The emphasis on legal continuity was particularly visible in the Polish and Hungarian transformations, and to an extent also the cases of Czechoslovakia and Bulgaria. Indeed, in the case of Hungary the constitution of the old order remained the basis of the new constitution (until very recently). In this, the Constitutional Court was the main actor in promoting legal continuity as the creation of the rule of law by means of the rule of law.³⁶ As stated by the then President of the Hungarian Constitutional Court:

³⁴ A. Arato, *Civil Society, Constitution, and Legitimacy* (Lanham, Md.: Rowman & Littlefield, 2000), 172.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 171.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 174.

The Constitutional Court has played a major role in "harmonizing" preconstitutional norms with the Constitution through a process of abstract judicial review. The new Constitution did not automatically suspend pre-existing laws. Instead, it required Parliament to review all pre-constitutional laws and regulations to ensure that they would be consistent with the newly established Constitution. In the process, such old laws acquired validity in the new system.³⁷

It should be said, however, that this logic was largely absent in other cases. In Romania no negotiated transformation took place, but rather a second layer of the communist party took over political power. And even if subsequent events invoked some of the symbols of negotiation, and the constitutional assembly pretended a negotiatory nature, much of the transformation was predominated by the post-communist National Salvation Front.³⁸

The negotiated transformation was then probably particularly a feature of the Hungarian and Polish transformations. On the level of ideas, it can be argued that an innovative mode of transition was grounded in an anti-foundationalist understanding of the changes. In other words, the revolutionary past, which had been based on the idea of a violent, *ex nihilo* creation of a new societal order, was denied in favour of a non-violent, peaceful negotiation of a new order with the involvement of new and old political forces.

Legal Constitutionalism

Given the emphases on the substantive rights-dimension as well as on the legal continuity dimension, it is not surprising that the emergence of constitutionalism in the ECE region took predominantly the form of legal constitutionalism.³⁹ A further significant reason for the emphasis on legalism, legal continuity, and the rule of law can be found in the fact that legalism was perceived as an antidote to the "ideological"⁴⁰ or "contradictory"⁴¹ socialist legality of the communist regimes. As has been argued by

³⁷ L. Sólyom, "The Hungarian Constitutional Court and Social Change," *Yale Journal of International Law* 19 (1994): 224.

³⁸ R. Carp and I. Stanomir, *Limitele Constituției: Despre guvernare, politică și cetățenie în România*, (Bucharest: Editura C.H. Beck, 2008).

³⁹ From 'Civil Society' to 'Europe'; Puchalska, *Limits to Democratic Constitutionalism in Central and Eastern Europe*.

⁴⁰ Arjomand, "Law, Political Reconstruction and Constitutional Politics," 7.

⁴¹ J. Příbáň and W. Sadurski, "The Role of Political Rights in the Democratization of Central and Eastern Europe," *Political Rights under Stress in 21st Century Europe*, ed. W. Sadurski (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 196–238.

Kim Lane Scheppele, the constitutions emerging in the region after 1989 were predominantly “not-like-that constitutions.”⁴² And in the words of Said Amir Arjomand:

The abuse of “legality” by Communism and Fascism necessitated a new, amplified, rights-based conception of the rule of law, which includes justiciable human rights substantively, and specifies mechanisms and institutional devices for safeguarding the rule of law—most notably the constitutional courts, and in some countries, additionally, the office of the Ombudsperson. It has been noted... that while the American-style, ‘diffuse’ judicial review appears as a good guarantor of the rule of law in the old, narrow sense, the constitutional courts, modelled on Kelsen’s design in the Austrian Constitution of 1920 but with a very significant extension, have lent themselves admirably to the guarantee of the rule of law in the new, amplified sense. The key to the role of the constitutional court as the instrument of the new constitutionalism is the idea of transition to democracy—first in post-Fascist Germany and Italy, then in post-authoritarian southern Europe, and finally in post-Communist Eastern Europe and Russia. The idea, and the institution of constitutional courts, became all the more attractive after 1989 as it held the promise of joining Europe.

The dominant discourse in the region consists of “legal constitutionalism,” or what Wojciech Sadurski has called a “moral realist position.” The idea that “the correct meaning of rights is objectively discernible by human reason, with the correct institutional incentives optimising the circumstances in which the ascertainment of the right meaning is likely.”⁴³ Such a position can, among others, be derived from the views of those who have argued for a strong position of constitutional courts, as well as in favour of an emphasis on the constitution’s status as higher law.

The “return” to constitutionalism and the rule of law or, at the very least, the complete rejection of the instrumentalization of law for political purposes was backed by a trend of globally emerging constitutionalism. Since the Second World War, and indeed more prominently since the end of the 1980s, the modern constitutional form has not only enjoyed its finest hour in terms of its widespread adoption in “new democracies,”⁴⁴ but has also experienced a distinct turn in terms of a re-interpretation and rebalancing of some of its key dimensions, particularly in the context of democratic transition. By the early twenty-first

⁴² Mentioned in: Markovits, “The Death of Socialist Law?,” 237.

⁴³ W. Sadurski, *Rights Before Courts. A Study of Constitutional Courts in Postcommunist States of Central and Eastern Europe* (Dordrecht: Springer, 2008), 28.

⁴⁴ P. Häberle, “Verfassungsentwicklungen in Osteuropa—aus der Sicht der Rechtsphilosophie und der Verfassungslehre,” *Archiv des öffentlichen Rechts* 117, 2 (1992): 170–211.

century, this “new constitutionalism”⁴⁵ has allegedly become predominant, even if not uncontested.

What makes “new constitutionalism” or “legal constitutionalism” relevant in the East Central European situation includes not least the following dimensions: a strong emphasis on order and stability, the idea of constitutional law as a higher law (and thus particularly entrenched against the influence from politics), the idea of fundamental rights, and the role of the constitution court as a guardian of the constitution. In other words, new constitutionalism provides one possible way of protecting societies from succumbing to totalitarianism and dictatorship. The emphasis here is on written constitutions with an entrenched “catalogue of rights,” and a “system of constitutional justice to defend those rights.”⁴⁶ The constitutional court plays a primary role in the protection of society in that it is an independent institution, which is not only the ultimate guardian and interpreter of the constitution, but equally so of fundamental rights.

This new, legalistic form of constitutionalism prioritizes the higher law status of the constitution and a bill of rights, a normative coherence and legal certainty, and takes an amplified understanding of the rule of law. The latter can be seen as part of post-authoritarian and post-totalitarian transitions to “new democracies,” such as those in Central and Eastern Europe. It includes a constitutional politics that comprises both the “judicialization of politics—which encompasses the reconstruction of the normative basis of the state—and the political activism of judicial actors.”⁴⁷ Much emphasis in democratic transition was then on legal formalism and coherence, and constitutionally entrenched democratic preconditions, while democratic participation was largely confined to “normal politics.”

The legalistic, “negative” form of constitutionalism that emerged in East Central Europe can be explored by means of a number of features that are by and large shared throughout the region. These features include an understanding of the constitution as a higher law or as the apex of the legal system, the idea of a set of essential individual rights, and the idea of separate institutions that are responsible for constitutional review.

⁴⁵ Arjomand, “Law, Political Reconstruction and Constitutional Politics,” 7; A. Stone Sweet, “Constitutions and Judicial Power” in *Comparative Politics*, ed. D. Caramani (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 217–239; A. Stone Sweet, “Constitutionalism, Legal Pluralism and International Regimes,” *Indiana Journal of Global Legal Studies* 16, 2 (2009): 621–645.

⁴⁶ Stone Sweet, “Constitutions and Judicial Power,” 219.

⁴⁷ See also Arjomand, “Law, Political Reconstruction and Constitutional Politics.”

The first feature, the constitution as the apex of the legal system, is a primary dimension in all the post-1989 constitutions. In Hungary—until 2010–2012 probably the country with the most evident adherence to a legal-constitutionalist view in the region—it was the anti-communist opposition that invoked an idea of negative constitutionalism of providing individual rights and society through a foundational law against the idea of a socialist *Rechtsstaat* as endorsed by the communist party.⁴⁸ The negative view of constitutionalism ultimately prevailed and was actively promoted by the newly instituted Constitutional Court. László Sólyom, the Chief Justice of the Hungarian Constitutional Court throughout the 1990s, believed that “a constitution that includes fundamental rights and freedoms and the fundaments of democratic state machinery, with separation of powers and an independent judiciary, is a *sine qua non* and the *starting point of the new order*.”⁴⁹ In the Romanian Constitutional Assembly, President Antonie Iorgovan argued that the “fundamental idea that has been at the basis of the elaboration of these theses [about the structure and principles of the new constitution] is to provide the definition of a charter of citizens’ rights and liberties,... to which the whole system of state powers will be subordinated as well as public life in general.”⁵⁰ As Ludwikowski has also argued, in the process of democratization in ECE the “constitution, recognized as the apex of hierarchically structured laws, was to provide a clear background for the assessment of legality of governmental and individual activities.”⁵¹ The higher law status has constitutionally been enshrined in the form of limitations of revision ranging from simple supermajorities (as in the case of Hungary a two-third parliamentary majority) to complex provisions regarding initiators of revision, parliamentary approval, and ratification by means of a popular referendum.⁵²

The second feature, the idea of a set of essential individual rights, became an equally endorsed element of ECE constitutions. As discussed

⁴⁸ Blokker, *Multiple Democracies in Europe*, 88–9.

⁴⁹ L. Sólyom, “The Role of Constitutional Courts in the Transition to Democracy: With Special Reference to Hungary,” *International Sociology* 18 (2003): 134; emphasis added.

⁵⁰ Regia Autonomă, *Geneza Constituției României. Lucrările Adunării Constituante* (Bucharest: Regia Autonomă Monitorul Oficial, 1998), 56. My translation.

⁵¹ R.R. Ludwikowski, “Constitution Making in the Countries of Former Soviet Dominance: current development,” *Georgia of International and Comparative Law* 23, 2 (1993): 157.

⁵² See Arato, *Civil Society, Constitution, and Legitimacy*, 163. Arato regards the Romanian revision rule as the ‘most difficult in the region’.

above, the communist constitutions had included ample catalogues of rights without, however, granting these rights the status of individual entitlements. Rather, individual rights were benefits granted by the state to citizens who were supposed to fulfil a range of duties, and were anyway interpreted arbitrarily and always within the context of the socialist ideal.⁵³ A main aim in all ECE constitutions was to entrench rights so as to protect these from political interference and arbitrariness. Basically, there are two constitutional dimensions relevant for the entrenchment of rights. One is the stipulation of when rights can be restricted by statute (the fewer opportunities for such restriction, the less rights are open to political interference and the more they will be guarded by independent judicial review). Another is the general revision rules of constitutions. Particular parts of the constitution, including rights, can be made more difficult to amend, and thus, again, less susceptible to political interference.⁵⁴

In some cases, the democratic ECE constitutions sometimes seem to have followed the German Basic Law in adopting an *Ewigkeitsklausel* (Article 79:3 of the German Basic Law), which limits the possibility of revision of, among others, a number of fundamental rights.⁵⁵ For instance, the Bulgarian constitution stipulates in Article 57:1 that “Citizens’ fundamental rights shall be inalienable.” Also the Polish constitution reflects a similar idea in Article 30: “The inherent and inalienable dignity of the person shall constitute a source of freedoms and rights of persons and citizens. It shall be inviolable. The respect and protection thereof shall be the obligation of public authorities.”

A third dimension is that of the role of Constitutional Courts. The East Central European countries adopted a more or less similar model of concentrated or centralized review, in which one singular institution has the responsibility and independent status to “authoritatively scrutinise laws in terms of their constitutionality.”⁵⁶ The emphasis in this type of constitutional order is

⁵³ Kurczewski and Sullivan, “The Bill of Rights and the Emerging Democracies,” 254–255.

⁵⁴ As Carp and Stanomir have argued, the limitations of constitutional revision do not, however, always result from a legalistic, rights-based view of constitutionalism, but can also serve the entrenchment of the projects of political majorities. Thus, in some cases, limits on revision can be understood as a way in which the ‘current generation of legislators impose that which follows from their own project of society’. In the Romanian case, this included, for instance, the republican form of state and the idea of a unitary state. Carp and Stanomir, *Limitele Constituției*, 233.

⁵⁵ Sadurski, *Rights Before Courts*, 80–81.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 5.

on an independent juridical authority that has the final word on the interpretation of the constitution and the constitutionality of existing laws.

While on the one hand we could speak of a region-wide phenomenon, on the other it is important to recognize the relatively different trajectories and institutional make-ups in the various countries.⁵⁷ Generally, there is no tradition of constitutional courts in the region (except for the Czechoslovak case, where such a court was established by the 1920 Constitution and operated from 1921 onwards⁵⁸). Many countries looked to Western Europe for inspiration. In one case, legal constitutionalism was already in place before 1989. In the communist period, Poland set up a Constitutional Tribunal in 1985 in an attempt to enhance the legitimacy of the regime and reflect a growing acceptance of a constitutionalist idea. In Poland, it took, however, until the 1997 Constitution for a legal constitutionalist argument to prevail, as the power of the parliament to override decisions of the Constitutional Tribunal by qualified majority was abolished after ample debate. The Constitutional Tribunal had been strongly in favour of the abolition. As described by Marek Safjan, former Chief Justice of the Polish Constitutional Tribunal, the abolition of parliamentary influence was a “final victory of the constitution over politics and recognition that nothing can justify keeping unconstitutional legal provisions within the legal system.”⁵⁹

In other countries Constitutional Courts were only set up in the early 1990s. Often such an establishment led to much conflict, as in the Romanian case, where the idea of a Constitutional Court formed the most important point of conflict in the debate around the new constitution.⁶⁰ What is more, since in Romania there was some tradition of judicial review by the High Court of Cassation and Justice, and the new Constitutional Court seemed to clash with the role of the existing Supreme Court.⁶¹ As described by Ion Muraru, president of the Romanian Constitutional Court in the 1990s, “in the debates in the Constituent Assembly, it was hard to convince even the lawyers that we needed a distinct authority of this sort.”⁶²

⁵⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁸ Ibid., 1–2.

⁵⁹ Cited in *ibid.*, 30.

⁶⁰ R. Weber, “The Romanian Constitutional Court and its impact upon the Rule of Law” (paper presented at the workshop “Constitutional Justice East and West,” Florence, EUI, 26–27 May 2000).

⁶¹ Ibid.

⁶² A. Mungiu-Pippidi, “Interview with President of the Romanian Constitutional Court, Ion Muraru,” *East European Constitutional Review* (winter 1997): 79.

In general, the idea of a constitutional order is by now shared—although not uncontested—throughout the region. For many political and legal actors, the idea of an independent constitutional guard seems indispensable in a post-totalitarian democracy. In the Polish case, for instance, a former chief justice of the Polish Constitutional Tribunal answered the question—in an interview in the late 1990s—whether there are any external mechanisms that shape Tribunal judges in their decisions, saying that “[t]here are no such mechanisms, no outside legal institutions to evaluate our decisions... There is no form of institutional control over the activity of the Tribunal.”⁶³

Alternative Constitutional Narratives

While a legalist understanding of constitutionalism has been dominant in ECE,⁶⁴ alternative interpretations of constitutionalism have continuously played a role since 1989. Democratic constitutionalism and communitarian constitutionalism are two such important alternative interpretations. Such understandings do not necessarily—or at least, not in all instances—contrast strongly with the main principles of the predominant view of legal constitutionalism, but they do tend to place a significantly different emphasis on the role of constitutionalism in democratic society.

Whereas the main tenets of legal constitutionalism emphasize the need for an independent, protecting, and largely negative role of constitutionalism (protecting citizens against the abuse of political power as well as delineating and monitoring different public powers), democratic constitutionalism emphasizes that “constitutional law-making should be controlled by democratic politics.”⁶⁵ As Bogusia Puchalska has recently argued, democratic constitutionalism in post-communist societies is mostly relevant in a negative sense, that is, as a parameter for the assessment of a lack of democratic participation in the process of constitution-making, and therefore as a means of assessing the weakness of democratic politics and a compromise of democratic legitimacy of constitutional structures.⁶⁶ Her argument focuses on the creation of constitutions and constitutional politics. But, as I have argued elsewhere, democratic constitutionalism also

⁶³ Grudzińska-Gross, “Introduction: When Polish Constitutionalism Began,” 78.

⁶⁴ Sadurski, *Rights Before Courts*.

⁶⁵ Puchalska, *Limits to Democratic Constitutionalism in Central and Eastern Europe*, 21.

⁶⁶ Puchalska, *Limits to Democratic Constitutionalism in Central and Eastern Europe*.

has a relevance in broader terms, i.e. indicating the extent to which constitutions promote democratic participation and self-government.⁶⁷ In other words, whereas the dissident legacy of the promotion of rights has played an important role in underpinning a legalist view of the constitution, it can be argued that a second dimension in dissident discourse—that of radical democracy and self-government—has also played some role in shaping post-1989 constitutional orders, even if in a much less prominent way. Rather than a “narrow conceptualization of the constitution as an instrument of governance,” a democratic view of constitutionalism emphasizes the democratic, participatory dimension of constitutions, in which the role of constitutions as vehicles of civic engagement and public participation in politics is stressed.⁶⁸ This dimension of republican democracy translates into constitutional emphases on direct democracy and forms of (local) self-government.

Below, I will briefly look at three relevant constitutional dimensions: the civic participation in a constitutional amendment, the institutions of direct democracy (in particular referenda), and similarly those of local self-government.

To begin, the Czech Republic’s constitution is seen as relatively weakly entrenched in that it requires a simple procedure for its revision (the Venice Commission, for instance, has classified the Czech Republic, in terms of constitutional amendability, in a middle group⁶⁹). The revision procedure requires an amendment only by means of constitutional acts (Art. 9:1). A qualified majority in both houses of parliament is necessary for the adoption of constitutional acts—the constitution stipulates the “concurrence of three-fifths of all Deputies and three-fifths of all Senators present is required” (Art. 39:4). In other words, no institution of direct civic participation in changing the constitutional rules exists in the Czech Republic.

The institutionalization of direct democracy in (national) legislation, even if endorsed by dissident forces in the run-up to the transition, seems also relatively compromised in the Czech Republic (also in comparison to other countries in the region). In a fairly stark contrast to the intensity of republican ideas of the 1980s, post-1989 Czech democracy appears to

⁶⁷ P. Blokker, “Dissidence, Republicanism, and Democratic Change,” *East European Politics and Societies* 15, 2 (2011): 219–243.

⁶⁸ Skapska, *From ‘Civil Society’ to ‘Europe’*, 228–229.

⁶⁹ European Commission for Democracy Through Law (Venice Commission), *Report on Constitutional Amendment*, CDL-AD(2010)001, 469/2008.

display the least extensive form of constitutional and legal institutionalization of direct democracy—at least regarding the instrument of civic consultation through referenda—in the region. Elements of direct democracy are clearly not prominent in the Czech Constitution. And while, as a result of a compromise, the 1992 constitution does entail the formulation that “[a] constitutional law may stipulate the cases when the people exercise state power directly” (Art. 2:2), to date no such law has been adopted, despite repeated attempts by pro-referendum groups.

On a closer look it might be argued, however, that while it is clear that political forces skeptical of referenda and direct democracy have so far prevailed, the issue is clearly not yet settled and continues to re-emerge in Czech political debate. For instance, in 2002, in the context of debates over the referendum on EU accession, a constitutional act for a general right to referendum was proposed, but was (once again) rejected by right-wing parties. Ultimately, an act on referendum that related merely to EU membership was adopted. But while a constitutionally guaranteed right to the holding of national referenda is still absent, referenda on the local level have become much more consequential. Admittedly, during the 1990s referenda were only used for questions of secession from existing municipal arrangements. And while the original legislation regarding local government—the 1992 Law on Local Elections and Referendums—notably stems from the Civic Forum period, no referendum of general importance took place on its basis in the first decade of democratization. However, following the amendment of the law in 2004 and 2008, clearing a number of ambiguities and strengthening the position of referenda proposers, local referenda have become a much more significant—and binding—civic instrument in Czech democracy, and are used for much wider purposes than before.⁷⁰

Regarding local self-government, it was originally dissident groups—not least gathered in the Civic Forum—that had actively endorsed “localism” and local democracy before 1989, and continued to actively endorse such ideas in the early 1990s. Notably Havel’s view of democracy throughout the 1990s was that of a “civic state” based on far-going decentralization. Constitutional traces of dissident ideas of civic participation and local self-government are indeed evident in the Constitution of 1992. One such trace concerns the emphasis on territorial decentralisation, local

⁷⁰ M. Smith, “The uneasy balance between participation and representation: local direct democracy in the Czech Republic” in *Local Direct Democracy in Europe*, ed. T. Schiller (Wiesbaden: VS Verlag, 2011), 33–53.

civic autonomy, and the qualification of local self-government as a “fundamental constitutional rule.”⁷¹ Throughout the 1990s, an emphasis on a democratic understanding of constitutionalism was particularly visible in a heated disagreement between Václav Havel and Václav Klaus on the role and form of civil society. According to Havel, the constitutionally codified regionalization needed further legal implementation, not least to stimulate civic participation, while the role of non-governmental organizations and forms of direct democracy needed to be genuinely institutionalized. Criticizing the delay in reforms of local and regional self-government, Havel declared in an address to the Czech parliament at the end of 1997 that he found it absurd, that

while we are building a market economy, many of us do not object to the fact that whole spheres of our public life—state administration is one of them—still bear the marks of the communist pattern of rule over the people, including a high degree of politicization. It is not true that reform of public administration will produce more bureaucracy and more bureaucrats. Unless it is disastrously mismanaged, it should achieve the very opposite.⁷²

An enhancement of the constitutional status of subnational self-government could also be detected in some rulings of the Czech Constitutional Court. For instance, in 2003 the Constitutional Court argued that,

The Constitutional Court considers local self-government to be an irreplaceable component in the development of democracy. Local self-government is an expression of the capability of local bodies, within the bounds provided by law, to regulate and govern part of public affairs on their own responsibility and in the interest of the local population.⁷³

In the case of Hungary, civic participation in constitutional amendment in the (now old) Hungarian constitution was relatively restrictive.⁷⁴ The rules for amendment were laid down in Article 24:3, which applies the “two-thirds” rule to constitutional amendment, meaning that only two-thirds of the parliament could introduce a constitutional change. The constitutional

⁷¹ M. Hadjiisky, “The Failure of the Participatory Democracy in the Czech Republic,” *West European Politics* 24, 3 (2001): 43–64; 48.

⁷² V. Havel, Address before the Members of Parliament, Prague, 9 December 1997, http://www.vaclavhavel.cz/showtrans.php?cat=projevy&val=144_aj_projevy.html&typ=HTML (Accessed December 13, 2014).

⁷³ CC 2003/02/05–Pl. ÚS 34/02: Territorial Self-Government; emphasis added.

⁷⁴ Arato speaks of the “monopoly of a purely parliamentary revision rule.” Arato, *Civil Society, Constitution, and Legitimacy*, 153.

right to the holding of referenda on citizens' initiatives does not apply to the amendment of constitutional rules. Even though the constitution does not state this, it became clear in a 1993 ruling of the Hungarian Constitutional Court.⁷⁵ The current 2012 constitution continues the exclusion of civic participation in constitutional matters. It states in Art. B:4 that "[t]he people exercise their power through their elected representatives, and directly in exceptional cases," while Article 8:3a on National Referendum states explicitly: "No national referendum may be held on... the amendment of the Constitution."

Direct democracy and citizen participation as general principles have played a significant role in the Hungarian process of democratization. As argued by Márta Dezső and András Bragyova, "demands for referendums were part of the movement for democracy" and since the transition, "no political party has denied that at least certain forms of direct democracy should be part of the Hungarian constitutional and political order."⁷⁶ Ironically, a first law on referenda and popular initiatives was adopted even before the democratic changes.⁷⁷ The 1989 law was however problematic from the outset, and in 1997 a new set of rules was constitutionalized through a constitutional amendment. The latter can be regarded as at least partially the outcome of initiatives related to the democratization movement of the 1980s. And even if the "scope and conditions of referenda were gradually restricted since 1989,"⁷⁸ it can be argued that the amendment of the constitution enhanced the status of direct democracy considerably, which was reiterated by a ruling of the Constitutional Court that views referenda as a fundamental political right. The status of direct democracy has changed, however, once again with the new constitution that was implemented in January 2012. Direct democracy is now more difficult in that the participation threshold has been augmented while the agenda initiative of citizens has been abolished.⁷⁹

⁷⁵ Ibid., 154; M. Dezső and A. Bragyova, "Hungary," in *Direct Democracy: The Eastern and Central European Experience*, ed. A. Auer and M. Buetzer (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2001), 75–76.

⁷⁶ M. Dezső and A. Bragyova, "Hungary," 63.

⁷⁷ Z.T. Pallinger, "Citizens' Initiatives in Hungary: An Additional Opportunity for Power-Sharing in an Extremely Majoritarian System" in *Citizens' Initiatives in Europe. Procedures and Consequences of Agenda-Setting by Citizens*, ed. M. Setälä and T. Schiller (Palgrave/MacMillan, 2012), 113.

⁷⁸ A. Sajó, "The Republic of Hungary" in *Constitutional Law of 10 EU Member States: the 2004 enlargement*, ed. C. A. J. M. Kortmann et al. (Deventer: Kluwer, 2006), IV–14.

⁷⁹ Pallinger, "Citizens' Initiatives in Hungary," 114.

Prior to 1989, the democratic opposition in Hungary had endorsed a civic-democratic narrative of civic participation and self-governance, although it was probably less vigorous than in the cases of *Solidarity* or the Civic Forum. In the political programmes of the government and opposition parties in 1989, local self-government was a recurrent theme. The Hungarian Democratic Forum, which formed the first post-communist government under József Antall, stated that they were in favour of promoting the autonomy of communities, enhancing the communities' property base, the autonomous handling of community matters by communities, and the setting up of a national body of local governments within the parliament.⁸⁰ And as stated in the program "for changing the system" of the Alliance of Free Democrats, "[s]elf-governments will have an important part to play in public life. Set up by citizens on functional or territorial grounds, they will differ from associations in that they will exercise executive power under the supervision of the law. It is in the capacity of self-government and not as a local executive instrument in state power that local councils will operate."⁸¹

In the constitutional changes of the early 1990s, local self-government enjoyed a high priority in that it was seen as an indispensable way of undermining the institutions of "democratic centralism." Thus, "the replacement of the council-based public administrative system with a sphere of independent local self-government was a key concern in administrative reform."⁸² The Hungarian constitution enshrined the right to self-government at local and county levels as a constitutional principle. Even if much of the regulation regarding local government has not changed in the 2012 Basic Law, concerns have been raised that local self-government is compromised in the new Basic Law, not least because of a lack of reference to the principle of local self-government as such (a concern raised for instance by the Council of Europe's Venice Commission) and minimal protection of the collective right of local self-government against central state infringement.⁸³

In the Polish case, the 1997 constitution grants the possibility of a popular, confirmatory referendum on constitutional amendments. Such a

⁸⁰ HDF, "Program of the Hungarian Democratic Forum," *World Affairs* 151, 4 (1990): 159–164.

⁸¹ AFD, "Alliance of Free Democrats: Socio-Liberal Opposition in Today's Hungary," *World Affairs* 151, 4 (1990): 165–169.

⁸² I. Balázs, "The Transformation of Hungarian Public Administration," *Public Administration* 71 (1993): 76.

⁸³ A. Patyi, "Local Government" in *The Basic of Law of Hungary. First Commentary*, ed. L. Csink, B. Schanda, A.Z. Varga (Dublin: Clarus Press, 2012), 217–230.

referendum is, however, not obligatory, and can only be initiated by the Sejm, the senate, or the president. Moreover, a referendum can be held only in the case of an amendment dealing with particular chapters of the constitution. In addition, citizens have the possibility to appeal to the Constitutional Court in case they presume that their constitutional rights and freedoms have been infringed by statutory law or decrees.⁸⁴

The Polish constitution of 1997 has a clear legal dimension for direct democracy and (local) self-government. In fact, it invokes this dimension already in the preamble, which argues that the basic law of the state is grounded in “the principle of *subsidiarity* in the strengthening the powers of citizens and their communities” (emphasis added) and in Article 4:2 it declares that “The Nation shall exercise such power *directly* or through their representatives” (emphasis added). In terms of direct democracy, a first reference to referenda was already made in 1987. Various acts have regulated the issue of national and local referenda since 1989.⁸⁵ The 1997 constitution enshrined the citizens’ right to direct participation through national referenda regarding ordinary legislation (Art. 125) as well as referenda on the local level (Art. 170).

Local self-government enjoyed a prominent role in the Polish transition and was actively promoted by Solidarity during the Roundtable negotiations in 1989. Even if no agreement was reached during the negotiations, subsequent steps towards the legislation of local self-government, based on Solidarity’s elaborated ideas, represented a “case of unprecedented progress during a brief period.”⁸⁶ As argued by Benzler, “[t]hat this goal [decentralization] could have been achieved relatively quickly—one year after the first partially free elections municipal self-government was implemented—is without doubt thanks to the discussion within the opposition of Solidarity that had lasted for almost ten years.”⁸⁷ Almost all of Solidarity’s demands for territorial self-government were enshrined in the Articles 43–47 of the amended 1952 constitution, while these were later re-confirmed in the Small Constitution of 1992. However, the constitu-

⁸⁴ Art. 79; Arato, *Civil Society, Constitution, and Legitimacy*, 225.

⁸⁵ A. Piasecki, “Twenty Years of Polish Direct Democracy at the local level” in *Local Direct Democracy in Europe*, ed. T. Schiller (Wiesbaden: VS Verlag, 2011), 126–127.

⁸⁶ J. Regulska, “Self-Governance or Central Control? Rewriting Constitutions in Central and Eastern Europe” in *Constitution Making in Eastern Europe*, ed. A.E.D. Howard (Washington, DC: Woodrow Wilson Center Press, 1993), 139.

⁸⁷ S. Benzler, “Transformation der Dauerzustand? Die Entwicklung der territorialen Selbstverwaltung in Polen”, in *Die Politik der dritten Ebene: Regionen im Europe der Union* ed. U. Bullmann (Baden-Baden: Nomos, 1994), 310–339.

tional political debate found real closure only after a drawn-out process that took place with the new constitution of 1997. While that constitution has often been criticized for being unspecific with regard to notions of local self-government and decentralization, it can at the same time be argued that it reflects some of the main ideas of Solidarity on self-governance. One significant instance of this can be found in the constitutional notion of subsidiarity. Subsidiarity was explicitly invoked during the drafting of the constitution. The author of the preamble, Catholic politician and former oppositionist Tadeusz Mazowiecki, a member of the Freedom Union which assembled leading dissident figures such as Bronisław Geremek, Władysław Frasyniuk, and Jacek Kuroń, specifically emphasized the importance of this term as a guiding principle.⁸⁸ The notion can be seen as closely related to ideas of civic autonomy and self-government, and, as such, it has become one of the fundamental principles of the Polish constitution. Even if it is only explicitly mentioned in the preamble, it provides a normative indication and is reflected in the actual text in various ways. Subsidiarity can be related to principles of self-government, decentralization, and democratic, substantive participation, and is included in the main text of the 1997 constitution.

In all countries in the region, the reconstitution of a political and cultural community was an important part of the constitution-making processes after 1989. In this sense, the idea of a liberal-democratic regime was supplemented by an ethno-cultural identification of the members of the political community. It can be argued that while this dimension is implicit in a legal-constitutional interpretation. In a communitarian view of constitutions, the issue of national identity and its preservation becomes explicit. In this perspective there is a greater attention to the symbolic dimension in general and for an identity dimension in particular. This does not necessarily mean that the instrumental rationality of constitutions and a language of rights are necessarily secondary, but rather that such rationality is interpreted with regard to a particular collective entity or community. In

⁸⁸ E. Popławska, "The New Constitutional Principle of Subsidiarity and 'the Diminishing State' in Poland," *Journal of Constitutional law in Eastern and Central Europe* 9, 1 (2002): 51-95. The preamble was formulated by the former dissident and Freedom Union member Tadeusz Mazowiecki, and his involvement suggests both a dissident and a Catholic dimension to the notion. Mazowiecki sustained that subsidiarity should be a central notion in the Polish Constitution. See T. Mazowiecki, "To był rząd zasadniczej zmiany," interview by Agnieszka Magdziak-Miszewska, Cezary Gawryś and Andrzej Friszke, *Więź* 40, 3 (1997): 24. I thank Robert Brier for his suggestions and the reference.

symbolic-identitarian terms, it means that the constitution is regarded as reflecting (or in need of doing so) the pre-political entity of the community and its innermost values and identity. In this regard, even if communitarian views see the constitution as embodying both a language of universal rights and of particularist values, they will always see the former as embedded in the latter, rather than the latter overriding the former as in a “priority of rights” understanding of the polity.⁸⁹

An interesting example of communitarian constitutionalism or perhaps even “constitutional nationalism” is that of Romania. The post-communist Romanian Constitution was adopted by the Constituent Assembly (*Adunarea Constituantă*) on 21 November 1991, and approved by a national referendum on 8 December that same year. The 1991 Constitution formed a clear break with the totalitarian past by instituting rule of law. But at the same time, the 1991 Constitution can be seen as constituting a form of continuity in its codification of the Romanian ethno-cultural identity and the nation as the foundation of the Romanian state. Because of a strong emphasis on the nation by the constitution’s makers, it is possible to argue that the 1991 Constitution (at least prior to its amendment in 2003) reflects a predominance of a political culture based on an “ethic of identity,” that is, the idea that the Romanian state is primarily to protect and further the interests of a rather narrowly defined ethno-cultural group, the Romanian nation, in (partial) detriment to the interests of various national minorities and in tension with the equally codified rule of law and “ethic of rights.”

As Cristian Preda has also argued, in somewhat exaggerated terms, “when it comes to facts, just as in its discourse, the Romanian transition is more related to the nation’s past than to the democratic present.”⁹⁰ The Romanian Constitution has, therefore, also been understood as reflecting a form of “constitutional nationalism.”⁹¹ Constitutional nationalism refers to the “tendency of treating the dominant ethnies in a privileged manner, that being formalized in the legal and constitutional framework of a society.”⁹²

⁸⁹ C. Ungureanu, “The European Constitution-Making and the Question of Religion,” (EUI Working Papers SPS, Florence, European University Institute, 2007), 4.

⁹⁰ “[D]ans les faits, tout comme dans les discours, la transition roumaine est plus liée au passé de la nation qu’au présent de la démocratie.” C. Preda, “La Nation dans la Constitution” in *Nation and national ideology : past, present and prospects - proceedings of the International Symposium held at the New Europe College, Bucharest, April 6–7, 2001* (Bucharest: New Europe College, 2002): 390.

⁹¹ See I. Lungu, “Romanian Constitutional Nationalism,” *Polish Sociological Review* 140, 4 (2002): 397–412.

⁹² *Ibid.*, 398.

The idea of constitutional nationalism can be related to that of “communitarian constitutionalism,” which considers individuals as members of a particular community, their goals and values shaped by such a community, and the constitution an expression of such shared goals and values.⁹³

In the Romanian case, it can be argued that the communitarian dimension of constitutionalism has become less important in the later years of transformation and that a legalistic view of the constitution has grown in importance.⁹⁴ In recent years, however, the fragility of the constitutional-democratic state has become evident. In 2007, and again in 2012, strong tensions between the president and the government have emerged, and have threatened the constitutional foundations of Romanian democracy. The independent role of the constitutional court has emerged as decisively weak in the face of power politics. This became particularly evident in the calls for help the court issued (twice) to the Council of Europe’s Venice Commission and EU authorities in the summer of 2012.

Hungary provides another case of constitutional turmoil. In what many perceive as a surprising upsurge of communitarian constitutionalism, the decisively legal-constitutionalist trajectory of the country has recently changed drastically. Whereas it cannot be denied that the country was characterized by a dualistic or tension-filled—civic-liberal and ethno-nationalist—political culture throughout the transformation years, the emergence of the latter in a full-blown constitutional project was difficult to foresee. This was also because throughout the 1990s Hungarian democracy was often portrayed as an archetypal case of adherence to a human-rights-based legal constitutionalism in which ethno-national dimensions played a marginal role at best. Recently, however, as argued by Jan-Werner Müller, a “nationalist conservative revolution has triumphed in Budapest; its leaders are busy dismantling constitutionalism and the rule of law.”⁹⁵ The so-called Basic Law (*Alaptörvény*) introduced by the centre-right Fidesz government in 2011 can be said to change the characteristics of Hungarian constitutionalism, from one grounded in the idea of a “secular state based upon a pluralist society” to one having its foundations

⁹³ U. Preuss, “Patterns of Constitutional Evolution and Change in Eastern Europe” in *Constitutional Policy and Change in Europe*, ed. J. Hesse and N. Johnson (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), 95–128.

⁹⁴ See Blokker, *Multiple Democracies in Europe: Political Culture in New Member States*; B. Iancu, “Constitutionalism in Perpetual Transition: The Case of Romania” in *The Law/Politics Distinction in Contemporary Public Law Adjudication*, ed. B. Iancu (Utrecht: Eleven International Publishing, 2009), 187.

⁹⁵ J.W. Müller, “The Hungarian Tragedy,” *Dissent* (Spring 2011): 5.

in “historical and religious considerations” and placing emphasis on the “family, nation, loyalty, faith and love.”⁹⁶ The new Basic Law reinterprets the category “We the People” in that in the 1989 Constitution the people referred to “those citizens who reside in the country and who are the subjects of the legal rights and obligations,” while the Basic Law refers to “one single Hungarian nation that belongs together.”⁹⁷

The Basic Law further emphasises its nature of communitarian constitutionalism through an extensive National Avowal (*Nemzeti hitvallás*), a kind of preamble but better understood as a “creed or confession of (political) faith used in a national context or performed by the nation itself.”⁹⁸ The National Avowal refers, for instance, to a link between Christianity and Hungarian nationhood, the fundamental importance of the nation and the family, and the significance of the “historical constitution.” One Hungarian observer confirms the communitarian constitutional dimension to the National Avowal and its reference to a collective identity and values:

I do not think that the perceptible shift of emphasis from the defence of individual rights to a double focus on the defence of both individual rights and the socio-political values of the whole political community substantiated by the history of political thought and justified by the reflections on the often competing findings of recent reconceptualisations of liberal democracies in communitarian, civic humanist and (neo- or civic-)Republican thought is misconceived or unacceptable. On the contrary, my understanding is that this is the result of a necessary development of democratic political theory initiated by recent Western experiences of political disinterest on the one side, and populist hyper-activism on the other side, both endangering the right workings of legitimate political institutions and of democratically elected agents in Western constitutional regimes. Given that the genre of the National Avowal by its very nature requires an identification with the “first person plural” viewpoint, I take it as an effort by the constitution-makers to react adequately on these later developments of constitutional thought.⁹⁹

At the same time, however, the same author warns against the “the dangers of a too strongly ‘nationalistic’ constitutional program,” which concern, *inter alia*, the lack of participation by opposition and civil society in the constitutional drafting, a curtailment of the substance of judicial review of the Constitutional Court, the exclusionary definitions of mem-

⁹⁶ K. Kovács and G.A. Tóth, “Hungary’s Constitutional Transformation,” *European Constitutional Law Review* 7 (2011): 198.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, 199.

⁹⁸ F. Horkay Hörcher, “The National Avowal” in *The Basic Law of Hungary*, ed. L. Csink, B. Schanda and A.Z. Varga (Dublin: Clarus Press, 2012), 42.

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, 52.

bership of the political community, the curtailment of the freedom of expression, and retroactive legislation.¹⁰⁰

Conclusion

In this chapter I have discussed the (re-)emergence of constitutionalism in the East Central European region in the wake of the collapse of communism. As has been shown, it is of crucial importance to consider the communist dimensions legal and political changes under communist rule with regard to of legality, the pre-1989 emergence of a rights language, and of the idea of constitutionalism, in order to understand both the changes in 1989 and the trajectories taken afterwards. It is the complex intertwining of both internal and external discourses, interpretations, and developments, taking different turns in distinct societies that inform the constitutionalization of the democratic societies that emerged in the 1990s. The emphasis on a legal understanding of constitutionalism in the region—corroborated by an extraordinary emphasis on legality, the rule of law and fundamental rights, and the importance of strong Constitutional Courts—is undeniable and is embedded in larger European structures. At the same time, alternative constitutional narratives are also evident in the democratization paths, as I have tried to indicate by discussing democratic constitutionalism, a wider-emancipatory, rather than a narrow-legalistic, reading of constitutionalism, as well as communitarian constitutionalism. Whereas the former, democratic constitutionalism, refers to an under-utilized potential for the further democratization of ECE societies, the latter, communitarian constitutionalism, has played an explicit role in the constitutionalization of some democracies (Romania, Slovakia), and has now recently re-emerged in the Hungarian case in a problematic reaction to, not least, processes of legal constitutionalization and European integration.

As the recent conflict developments in both Hungary and Romania show, the processes of democratization and constitutionalization in the ECE region are not yet settled, and conflicts continue to emerge around notions of sovereignty, democratic rule, and the role of constitutions in national democracies, situated in an evermore complex, pluralistic, and post-Westphalian European context.

¹⁰⁰ See Kovács and Tóth, “Hungary’s Constitutional Transformation.”

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Anti-Communism of the Future

Czech Post-Dissident Neoconservatives in Post-Communist Transformation

PETR ROUBAL

One of the many streams of the Czechoslovak dissent movement under communism was a small group of admirers of American neoconservatism. This group, which centred on two Prague Catholic intellectuals Daniel Kroupa and Pavel Bratinka, established strong links to neoliberal economists within official structures. After the fall of communism, this unique coalition of dissent—with its moral capital and neoliberal economists who provided technocratic legitimacy—proved surprisingly successful in post-communist politics. They formed the small party Civic Democratic Alliance (*Občanská demokratická aliance*, ODA), which, unlike the other streams of the dissent movement, exercised continuous influence on the course of the transformation throughout most of the decade following communism. The coalition of neoconservative dissidents and neoliberal economists was based on “anti-communism of the future,” which found that the best way to deal with the communist heritage was to implement as quickly and as radically as possible a set of neoliberal policies that would forever prevent a return of communism.¹

The following text maps how these neoconservative dissidents, mostly Prague Catholic intellectuals with very similar biographies, pushed for a radical vision of neoconservative (counter)revolution in several principal areas. First, ODA attempted to push through the concept of discontinuity between communism and post-communism through a general “historical law” on the illegitimate nature of communist rule. Second, the ODA ar-

¹ This text is an updated and revised version of P. Roubal, “Konzervativní kontrarevoluce. Občanská demokratická aliance a postkomunistická transformace” in *Rozdělení minulosti: Vytváření politických identit v České republice po roce 1989*, ed. A. Gjuríčová et al. (Prague: Knihovna Václava Havla, 2011), 251–285. This paper is part of a research project on Czechoslovak federal parliament in 1989–1992 supported by a grant from the Czech Science Foundation (GAČR P410/11/0423).

gued for a “functional federation,” which entailed the party refusing to back down to Slovak demands and instead proposed constitutional amendments limiting the influence of the two republics on federal decision-making. This radical standpoint, which greatly contributed to the ODA’s electoral success, was less motivated by national chauvinism than by an idea of the “left-wing nature of nationalism,” which it understood as an effort of former communists to reverse the process of transformation. Third, the text looks at the role ODA played in the process of privatization, which it saw as a method by which the most radical break with the communist past could be made. From one day to another the economic power of individuals should have increased and, in the words of Tomáš Ježek, “the economic power of the communist state was to be broken.”² Part of this policy was also the successful effort to legislate the restitution of property confiscated by the communist government and an unsuccessful attempt at breaking up agricultural cooperatives. Both policies caused major conflict with the coalition partners, which could be summed up into the principal dispute of whether the “thick line separating the past” should be drawn after November 1989 or February 1948.³

All these political goals of ODA are united by a specific form of anti-communism motivated far more by the vision of the future than a view of the past. We can label this particular branch of anti-communism as “anti-communism of the future.” Its main constitutive element is the belief in a neoliberal solution of transformation. This belief had a “purifying” power because, from the perspective of the building up of a new conservative order, the former membership of the communist party did not play any important role. The neoliberal ideology washed away the sins and enabled the conversion of the former communist (or obedient non-members), because it was a part of the anti-communism of the future which saw a danger in the future communist, not the former one. For instance, after the mandatory ritual absolution,⁴ Vladimír Dlouhý, former deputy director of

² P. Husák, *Budování kapitalismu v Čechách: Rozhovory s Tomášem Ježkem* (Prague: Volvox Globator 1997), 195.

³ There were other “lines” as well. Especially the reform communists did not see either 1948 or 1989 as the limits of “dealing with the past.” The historical narrative without Munich of 1938 and the Prague Spring of 1968 did not make much sense to them.

⁴ Generally the former members of the Communist Party were not allowed to be members of ODA. The narrow ODA leadership could grant an exception to this rule. There were 4.5% of former communists in ODA in 1995. See P. Dimun and M. Hamerský, *10 let na straně svobody: kronika ODA z let 1989–1999* (Brno: Bachant, 1999), 110. At the IX Party Conference in Ostrava, the proposal to ban the membership to former communists

the Economic Forecasting Institute and head of the institute's party cell, could become a member of the ODA and later became its vice chairman as he was "objectively" anti-communist. Through his popularity and political program, Dlouhý helped the party attain its main political goal of breaking with the communist era as quickly as possible. The final part of the text deals with the deep crisis of this neoliberal belief and the breaking of the consensus of the right-wing elites in the second half of the 1990s. This ultimately meant the end of a politically influential alliance of dissident intellectuals and neoliberal economists, first inside the governing coalition and later in the ODA itself. As a result, the political program of anti-communism of the future, which aspired to build up a new social order preventing the recurrence of communism as quickly as possible, turned into the politics of memory, for which the past is a tool of political legitimization and delegitimization.

Dissident Roots

Despite the fact that the ODA was established only on December 17, 1989 in the apartment of Pavel Bratinka, many of its thirteen "founding fathers"⁵ had already formed a relatively coherent and self-standing political stream of the Czech dissident movement for some time. Sean Hanley demonstrates that the future founders of the ODA (whom he calls dissident neoconservatives) belong to the Catholic-conservative stream of the dissident movement (after all, the apartment of Daniel Kroupa is listed among the birth places of Václav Benda's Christian Democratic Party),⁶ and they, too, were concerned with morality and social cohesion. In con-

altogether led to a lengthy and dramatic discussion, nevertheless only about one third of the delegates eventually voted for it. See *Archiv Ústavu pro soudobé dějiny AV ČR*, v.v.i. [further *A ÚSD*], Collection Soudobá dokumentace (further SD), fond Občanská demokratická aliance (further ODA), box 18, Videozáznam IX. celostátní konference ODA v Ostravě, VHS 3.

⁵ Pavel Bratinka, Roman Češka, Viktor Dobal, Tomáš Ježek, Jiří Kabele, Eva Klvačová, Daniel Kroupa, Petr Malý, Ivan Mašek, Jan Payne, Josef Reichman, Jiří Skalický a Jaromír Žegklitz.

⁶ See the interview with Daniel Kroupa in M. Vaněk and P. Urbásek, ed., *Vítězové? Porážení? Životopisná interview. I. díl: Disent v období tzv. Normalizace* (Prague: Prostor, 2005), 306; see also A. Gjuričová, "Dvě cesty <<křesťanské politiky>>: Československá strana lidová a Křesťanskodemokratická strana v první polovině devadesátých let" in A. Gjuričová et al. *Rozdělení minulostí*, 217–247.

trast with conservative dissent, however, they found a solution not in moral regeneration, but in the revival of the market economy.⁷

The “flat” seminars Kampademia, which were organized since the early seventies by Daniel Kroupa and Martin Palouš in private apartments (as well as Kroupa’s own philosophical seminar), played an important role in the ideological development and networking of this dissident group. Equally important was the participation of the future founders of the ODA in the lecture series of the “underground university” organized by the Jan Hus Educational Foundation,⁸ where they could meet a number of well-known right-wing Western intellectuals. The contact with Roger Scruton, who later supported the ODA both intellectually and financially, had the deepest impact on the neoconservative dissidents. Daniel Kroupa claimed that the impact of Scruton and other figures of the British conservative circle around the Salisbury Review was not felt very strongly—first because of its stress on ancient traditions and secondly because their authoritarianism did not resonate well in the Czech political discourse (this view is shared by Sean Hanley in his excellent study of the Czech Right).⁹ Nevertheless, in part of the ODA we later find a relatively strong echo of British conservatism, particularly within the undisguised skepticism towards democratic procedures. These politicians, for instance, principally opposed referenda,¹⁰ stressing the limits of democratic decision-making by repeatedly claiming that “one cannot vote about truth”¹¹ and believing democracy a mere tool to reach personal freedom.¹²

⁷ S. Hanley, *The new right in the new Europe: Czech transformation and right-wing politics, 1989–2006* (London: Routledge, 2008), 57.

⁸ See B. Day, *The Velvet Philosophers* (London: Claridge Press, 1999).

⁹ Hanley, *The new right in the new Europe*, 56; D. Kroupa, *Svoboda a řád* (Prague: Éós, 1996), 12.

¹⁰ D. Kroupa, *Svoboda a řád*, 88: According to Kroupa, the “greatest evil” threatening Czech society is direct democracy, which for the first time in history is technologically possible and could lead to the establishment of a totalitarian version of democracy.

¹¹ I. Mašek, *Tak pravil Ivan Mašek, aneb Maškaráda* (Prague: Votobia, 1998), 23. “The truth is of course a category that we cannot vote about. We can search for truth, we can listen to the truth, but we cannot vote about it.”

¹² According to Daniel Kroupa, “We place freedom on the first place, second comes the law, which secures freedom, and only then comes democracy as a procedure that establishes the law.” D. Kroupa, *Svoboda a řád*, 69. See also the text of Conservative Contract (*Konservativní smlouva*) by Ivan Mašek, reprinted in Mašek, *Tak pravil Ivan Mašek*, 118–123. According to Čestmír Hofhanzl, the reckoning with the communist crimes should precede the very establishment of democratic order, “only then can we

Yet it is true that American neoconservatism was more influential in Czech dissident circles than British conservatism. Neoconservatism, implanted into the dissident movement by Pavel Bratinka, a regular and long-term visitor to the library of the American Embassy,¹³ separated the future founders of the ODA from the other intellectual streams of dissent and at the same time built a bridge to the neoliberal economists in the official sphere. Hanley lists a number of reasons why neoconservatism represented an attractive tool in unmasking communism: first, uncompromising, hawkish politics towards the “Soviet Empire” were seen as a barrier against yet another “betrayal of the West.” Second, the same policy also provided a political space for an active role of East European dissent (in contrast with *Ostpolitik* or *détente*). Third, in contrast with traditional conservatism, the American neoconservatism consciously operated with the ideals of democracy and universal human rights. Fourth, the Central European origin of many neoconservative thinkers guaranteed a certain level of sensitivity to the specific nature of the region. Fifth, the neoconservative literature struggled more with the New Left than with traditional Marxism and thus resonated with dissident debates on “socialism with a human face.” Sixth, for those young Prague Catholic intellectuals, it was also important that neoconservatism stress the ability of capitalism to contribute to the general welfare (though on the condition that it was rooted in religious morals and traditional values), which provided support against the traditional Czech Catholic skepticism about the market. And finally, the neoconservative principle of spreading “democratic capitalism” also resonated with Masaryk’s idea of Czech statehood as a part of a democratic *World Revolution*, yet it went against the firmly rooted relationship between socialism and democracy in Czech political discourse.¹⁴

The ideological proximity of neoconservatism and economic neoliberalism enabled the ODA to form an intellectual, and later politically powerful, coalition with some of the liberal-minded official economists, in particular with Tomáš Ježek, but also Roman Češka, Eva Klvačová, and Karel Kříž. By implanting them into the dissident environment, these economists became “doctors of history” to some degree. As the “road to serfdom” leads, according to Hayek, through restriction and later destruction of the market, so the way out has to follow its restoration. Economists, unlike historians or

embark on the road to a moral and ethical society and to democracy.” Č. Hofhanzl, *Tak pravil Čestmír Hofhanzl* (Prague: Votobia, 1998), 33.

¹³ Day, *Velvet Philosophers*, 12.

¹⁴ Hanley, *The new right in the new Europe*, 56.

philosophers, would master the necessary terminology to address the needed steps towards the renewal of the free market, the panacea that would heal Czech history from the illness of communism. It is no accident, therefore, that the translation of Hayek's *Road to Serfdom* was done independently by Tomáš Ježek (in the office of the Economic Forecasting Institute) and Pavel Bratinka (in a Prague boiler room).¹⁵

Neoconservatism also resonated with the theory of totalitarianism and enabled an understanding of communism as an embodied "evil," taking it out of the context of Czech history (as well as the Czech future). The founders of the ODA did not take part in the dissident disputes about the meaning of Czech history and did not argue about the historical causes of communism.¹⁶ The time axis, so important for the other branches of dissent, changed for them into a spatial axis: the roots of communism were to be found not in the Czech past, but "in the East," and the solution of the crisis did not reside in the special Czech path to the future, but "in the West."¹⁷

For the future founders of the ODA, neoconservatism was a tool for dealing with the communist heritage, but their principal anti-communist standpoint had deeper generational, social, and religious roots. Most of the founders of the ODA were born at the end of the forties into middle-class Catholic families.¹⁸ Their fathers suffered not only from confiscation of property under "nationalization," but also often persecution and imprisonment (the father of Jiří Křižan, "the toughest of the president's men"—who joined the ODA somewhat later—was even executed in 1951). For instance, for Čestmír Hofhanzl, the childhood experience of seeing the

¹⁵ Dimun and Hamerský, *10 let na straně svobody*, 10.

¹⁶ Nevertheless ODA shares in the general cult of the interwar First Republic, see for instance the claim of Karel Ledvinka: "The communists cultivated the worst traits of our national character and grew up the most repulsive variant of the Small Czech Man: irresponsible, uncreative, lazy and thoroughly corrupt. That is, they created the exact opposite of the Czech man of the First Republic: industrial, skilful and well educated." Dimun and Hamerský, *10 let na straně svobody*, 244.

¹⁷ This is the source of a xenophobic attitude to Russians and the "East" in general. Tomáš Ježek for instance said, "The mathematical economy in its extreme, as it was practised under socialism, is a crazy Russian thing, a useless, self-contained intellectual game, intellectual game out of boredom so similar to a chess game. When I used to observe Russia, those milkmaids, those lines in front of Lenin's Mausoleum and all those other cretinisms, I always told myself: this must be such a stupid nation. And I could not square it with the fact that the chess geniuses are born over there. Now I know there is no contradiction at all." Husák, *Budování kapitalismu v Čechách*, 65.

¹⁸ For instance Kroupa's father was a successful shipping agent, Mašek's father was a lawyer.

persecution of his *kulak* father in the 1950s defined him to such an extent that his anti-communist conviction did not require any additional proof.¹⁹ Hofhanzl—for a long time the ODA's only non-Prague member—therefore could speak about himself as one of the few dissidents of south-Bohemian Vysočina, despite the fact that a local “belated revolutionary” would be a more fitting label.²⁰ Hofhanzl had never signed the Charter 77 proclamation, nor had he participated in the dissent in any other way. He was never imprisoned, nor fired from a job for political reasons. He spent most of the normalization period working in his profession, and his first political act was a critical comment during a company meeting less than a week before November 17, 1989.²¹ His “dissidence” therefore rested less on active resistance than on the principal, life-long refusal of communism as a cultural code, which had to fail inevitably during the clash of civilizations with the Christian West.²²

The exception confirming the rule was one of the few former communists among the “founding fathers,” Tomáš Ježek, who explained his reasons for joining the communist party as a combination of having a low social origin and a protestant confession:

Communism did not repulse me as I have never met it as a real-life thing. I came from the family of a teacher and a postman; we never owned anything, so no one took anything from us. So I did not have any lasting, unforgettable personal experience that would cause me to refuse communism strongly and definitely at an early age. I knew communism from books. As an industrial student, I studied Marx's *Capital* carefully, because it is an intellectually imposing work and its ideas are tempting and exciting at first sight. Unfortunately, the Czech Protestant church—and I really mean it—has some common ground with communism, which makes it tempting for the Protestants. (...) The social aspect of Husitism, those puncheons in Tábor must have been rooted in me and joining the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia easily followed from there.²³

¹⁹ For a thorough discussion of this latent anti-communism among the victims of 1950s persecutions, see Françoise Mayer, *Les Tchèques et leur communisme: mémoire et identités politiques* (Paris: Editions de l'Ecole des hautes études en sciences sociales, 2004).

²⁰ Hofhanzl, *Tak pravil Čestmír Hofhanzl*, 50.

²¹ Ibid.

²² This understanding of the Cold War as a clash of civilizations can be seen also in Bratinka's frequent references to the black-and-white world of Tolkien's *Lord of the Rings*. See for instance the interview for the Czech public TV from 2006 at <http://www.89.usd.cas.cz/cs/videoa.html> (accessed January 3, 2014).

²³ Husák, *Budování kapitalismu v Čechách*, 272. T. Ježek was a member of KSČ from the early sixties till 1968. His father, a high school teacher, was executed by the Nazis in the last days of the war. See, T. Ježek, *Ježkovy voči* (Prague: Gasset, 2007), 7. He came in

Most of the future founders of the ODA could not study the humanities because of their bourgeois origin. With the thaw of the late sixties, most of them managed to graduate in technical subjects or medicine. As a technical intelligentsia, they reached relatively high positions during the normalization. For example, Ivan Mašek, who was shortly imprisoned in 1969, was head of the computer center with some forty employees during the entire eighties, which included prominent dissidents such as Martin Palouš, Zdeněk Pinc or Filip Topol.²⁴ This practical and managerial experience was another factor that eased contact and created common ground with the neoliberal economists.

The anti-communism of these dissidents was not, despite the influence of neoconservatism, as much an ideological position as it was a worldview. This is how Kroupa describes his meeting with Bratinka in 1972: "Back then Pavel Bratinka was a rather comical figure. Full-bearded, wearing a long coat and a sombrero he carried a rifle with him to the church mass. It was an air-gun, and as we learned later, he used to go somewhere out of town, where they modelled communists out of clay and shot at them. They were caught by the police repeatedly, but nothing happened to them."²⁵

As with other dissident streams, the relation to the Prague Spring became an important defining marker. Daniel Kroupa, for instance, describes the importance of this event on his later political orientation in the principal dispute between Václav Havel and Milan Kundera on the nature of 1968, i.e. whether this was a unique Czech contribution to world politics in the form of "democratic socialism," or a half-hearted attempt to return to political normality.²⁶ For the future founders of the ODA, Dub-

touch with the dissident movement through his contact with Rita Klímová, whom he knew from the Institute of Economy of the Academy of Sciences in the sixties. Husák, *Budování kapitalismu v Čechách*, 28.

²⁴ Mašek, *Tak pravil Ivan Mašek*, 48. See also newspaper articles by Petr Pavlovský from the years 1991 and 1992, in particular P. Pavlovský, "O kolaboraci aktivní, pasivní a kompenzované" and "Kdo má a kdo nemá právo do <<toho>> mluvit" in *Chod'te vpravo! Výběr článků z let 1990–1992* (Prague: H&H, 1992), 25–26, 55–57.

²⁵ Vaněk and Urbášek, *Vítězové? Poražení?*, 290.

²⁶ Kroupa, *Svoboda a řád*, 9 (quote from Hanley, *The new right in the new Europe*, 55). For the conflict Havel – Kundera, see M. Havelka, *První diskuze o tzv. normalizaci: Polemika Václava Havla a Milana Kundery 1968–1969* in *Věda v Československu v období normalizace (1970–1975)*, ed. A. Kostlán, (Prague: Výzkumné centrum pro dějiny vědy, 2002), 35–53; M. Kopeček, "Polemika Milan Kundera–Václav Havel. Spory o českou otázku v letech 1967–1969 a jejich historický obraz" in *Pražské jaro 1968: Literatura-Film-Média*, ed. H. Kupcová (Prague: Literární akademie 2009), 129–138.

ček became living proof that communism cannot be reformed, and they vehemently opposed his return to the post-November politics. Kroupa held Dubček's signing of the "Truncheon Law" against him and did not stand up for his persecuted supporters.²⁷ Dubček would play in 1989, according to Kroupa, the same role as Beneš after 1945: the "returning leader, who ruins everything."²⁸ Reformed communism was for the future founders of the ODA a greater social threat than the obvious failing of "really existing socialism," because it masked, in their view, the social-engineering ambitions of every communist project and opened the gate for future mutations of the communist regime.

Conservative Counterrevolution

Shortly after the party was established, ODA presented its basic programmatic text, *The Road Towards a Free Society*, which became a starting point for all of its future party programs and which, for a long time, was the only developed party program in Czechoslovak politics.²⁹ Ten pages of the text resembled an academic lecture on political theory more than the program of a political party. In an abstract language, it presented "such an understanding of society and principles of its organization that would according to our conviction best correspond to the needs of a free community." The ODA presented itself as an intellectual heir to Charter 77, stressing its link to the Economic Forecasting Institute and positioning itself as a "party of program and ideas" and not aspiring for mass membership.³⁰ The text subsequently defined terms such as politics (a search for interests common to all citizens—current, former and future), freedom (the ability of the individual to create opportunities for others), rule of law

²⁷ "Truncheon Law," was a legal instrument curtailing political freedoms and allowing harsh punishment of public protests. It was adopted by the Presidium of the Federal Parliament, headed by Alexander Dubček, in direct response to the protest during the first anniversary of the Soviet intervention in August 1969.

²⁸ Interview with D. Kroupa for the public Czech TV in 2006 available at <http://www.89.usd.cas.cz/cs/video.html> (accessed January 3, 2014).

²⁹ P. Pšejka and M. Mareš, "Programatika a členská struktura ODA," *Politologický časopis* 5, 4 (1998), 406–418. The document is reprinted in Dimun and Hamerský, *10 let na straně svobody*, 256–263.

³⁰ The text implies that ODA does not actually want rank-and-file members: "The goal of ODA is to provide a platform for politicians, experts and organisers capable of formulating and pushing through well-argued proposals...." Dimun and Hamerský, *10 let na straně svobody*, 256.

(legal protection of dignity of the individual and human solidarity, strict separation of private and public law). It also discussed the tools to maintain these values: parliamentary democracy, market economy, and social, moral and environmental responsibility. As far as a proper political program, it was only clear that the ODA advocated a small state, whose main task was a defense against its own power, the creation of maximum space for free operation of market forces, tax breaks for NGOs, and an opposition to general social welfare (citizens are transferring their social commitment to the state and increasingly taking care of themselves only).³¹

The high degree of generalization and the omission of analysis regarding the current state of the country (the text does not mention the word communism or socialism), as well as any concrete political program, does not testify to the intellectual limits of the authors but rather to the (counter)revolutionary understanding of the changes of the first post-November weeks. For the authors, society was a *tabula rasa*, and a ready-made concept for a new social, economic, political, and moral order could be imprinted on it. Despite its bookish style, the program *Road towards the Free Society* was both a revolutionary and counterrevolutionary document. Daniel Kroupa speaks about 1989 as an exceptional historical moment in a way that evokes the eschatological visions of Walter Benjamin: "It was as if a new social order expanded into the whole country from the smoking-room of *Laterna magika*. The time started to be measured in a different way. It was a time of creation, accompanied by the knowledge that the fundamentals of a new social order are being laid."³² Such a vision of the coming of a new conservative social order inevitably contained the image of a radical historical break, a discontinuity with the communist past.

Laws of History and Historical Laws

Yet there was no radical break from the past in 1989, which in the eyes of the ODA was the fault of the reformed communists. The struggle against the continuity with the old regime became one of the most important political goals of the ODA, and it shaped many of its political standpoints.

³¹ Social security, for instance, should not be guaranteed by the state but merely supported as a "spontaneously created solution." *Ibid*, 261.

³² Kroupa, *Svoboda a řád*, 48.

Kroupa for instance explained his resistance against Havel's idea that the Civic Forum should be dissolved in advance of the first election by saying that it is necessary that: "communism in our country at least once publicly and clearly loses in a free election (...) we need to see that the nation clearly refused communism."³³ For him, the election of 1990 could substitute for the failure of November 1989, which in retrospect was seen as lacking a revolutionary nature and did not clearly separate the communist past from the democratic future. After the 1990 election, despite the negligible number of members (70) and small number of deputies in the parliaments (7),³⁴ the ODA styled itself as the Right's avant-garde and initiated an Inter-parliamentary Club of the Democratic Right. The ODA used this platform, as well as the Civic Forum, to launch neoliberal and anti-communist themes, such as extrajudicial rehabilitations, dismissal of public prosecutors with a communist past, rejection of the law on state planning,³⁵ and naturally, the cleansing of the constitutional institutions through lustrations (Ivan Mašek for instance played an important role in the lustration committee of the Czech National Council).³⁶

The ODA tried to embed practical anti-Communist measures into a general "historical law," which would be a legal way of completing the Velvet Revolution by legislating and justifying historical discontinuity

³³ *Ibid*, 29.

³⁴ The following ODA members were elected on the OF ticket: to the Federal Assembly Pavel Bratinka, Daniel Kroupa and Jiří Skalický, to the Czech National Council Tomáš Ježek, Čestmír Hofhanzl, Ivan Mašek and Viktor Dobal. Till the election 1992 several OF deputies joined in: in the Federal Assembly Jan Štern, Vladimír Dlouhý, Antonín Blažek and Libor Kudláček, in the Czech National Council Jan Kalvoda, Oldřich Kužilek, Karel Ledvinka, Jaroslava Moserová and Vladimír Šuman.

³⁵ See M. Zeman, *Jak jsem se mýlil v politice*. (Prague: Ottovo nakladatelství, 2005), 104. See also Bratinka's speech in the Federal Assembly on 13 December 1990, *Společná česko-slovenská digitální parlamentní knihovna*, FS 1990–1992–stenoprotokoly, 9. společná schůze SL a SN, 13 December 1990, <http://www.psp.cz/eknih/index.htm>.

³⁶ As far as lustrations are concerned, ODA deputies were not particularly radical, which might have been caused by their personal experience of activity in dissent. During the drafting of lustration law, Kroupa successfully argued that the Prague Spring communist officials should be exempt from its effect. See his speech in the Federal Assembly on 3 October 1991, *Společná česko-slovenská digitální parlamentní knihovna*, FS 1990–1992–stenoprotokoly, 17. společná schůze SL a SN, 3 October 1990 (see <http://www.psp.cz/eknih/index.htm>). See also L. Kopeček, *Éra nevinosti: Česká politika 1989–1997* (Brno: Barrister & Principal 2010), 118. ODA also, in contrast with ODS, stood against the publication of the list of secret service informers and argued for the general right of self-lustration, see for instance J. Štern, "Jednotná pravice," *Mladá fronta*, September 19, 1991.

with the communist period. In October 1990 the ODA thus initiated the first attempt at passing a “historical law” which would condemn the communist regime as “illegitimate and contemptible.” For tactical reasons, the ODA chose the form of a mere parliamentary proclamation rather than a law, as this required a simple rather than qualified majority. The complicated path of the proposal through the Federal Parliament, as well as the heated day-long discussion in its plenary session that took place in May 1991, shows that the individual political actors were aware of the fact that the proclamation was not merely an interpretation of one historical period, but a question of legal (dis)continuity with potentially far-reaching consequences for the current “politics of reconciliation.”³⁷ In this, the declaration differs from proclamatory historical laws, such as *lex Masaryk*, which merely puts a historical interpretation into a form of law.³⁸ It is part of a long-term strategy of legislative steps aimed at “dealing with the past.” The declaration was supposed to provide a broader legal framework for these legal steps in a form of a “preamble to all the laws aimed at redressing injustices and crimes, which the Federal Assembly passed or will pass,” in order to prove that these laws are not just humanitarian gestures, but important steps in the “rehabilitation of the very institution of the parliament.”³⁹

The declaration, formulated by the first leader of the ODA (until March 1992) Pavel Bratinka, based the claim on the illegitimate and contemptible nature of the communist regime and broke down the declaration into four basic points: first, under the threat of various forms of persecution, citizens were deprived of the possibility to freely express their politi-

³⁷ The declaration was presented as document 525, discussed and approved on 23 May 1991 as document 142. For the debate quoted below, see *Společná česko-slovenská digitální parlamentní knihovna*, FS 1990–1992 – stenoprotokoly, 15. společná schůze SL a SN, 23. 5. 1991 (<http://www.psp.cz/eknih/index.htm>).

³⁸ *Lex Masaryk* was passed in 1930 and it consisted of one short sentence praising the first Czechoslovak president. Such a proclamatory law was later pushed through by a group of deputies of the Civic Democratic Party (without active participation of ODA parliamentarians) as a Law on the Era of Un-freedom. This law consisted of one sentence “Through its lawlessness and crimes, the communist dictatorship stained humaneness and the state.” The term “era of un-freedom” existed already in the Czechoslovak legal system—in Beneš decrees, it referred to the period of the Second Republic and the Nazi Occupation. See T. Pecina, *Doba nesvobody*, http://iuridictum.pecina.cz/w/Doba_nesvobody (accessed January 3, 2014).

³⁹ This proposal was not passed and was substituted by the formulation “The Federal Assembly binds the government of Czech and Slovak Federal Republic to base its legal proposals and their application on this declaration.”

cal will; second, next to a general violation of human rights, some groups were exposed to a particularly severe oppression; third, the communist party renewed a de-facto serfdom when “the possibility of travelling out of the country (...) was in the hands of the communist party apparatus.” And finally, the citizens were forced to:

hide their moral judgement about the situation in the country and society, often even in front of their closest environment, or they were even forced for existential reasons to pretend to be in agreement with the ruling order... This state of affairs meant for many citizens that they had to express an agreement with something they considered a lie or a crime, or they were forced to be silent about it. Thus the citizens were deprived of their basic human dignity, i.e. deprived of the ability of moral and rational judgement and possibility to express this judgement.

This enumerative definition of communism—and particularly the latter part which aimed to depict the regime as an illegitimate tyranny that clashed with general human values—attempted to explain the absence of active and long-lasting resistance against the regime. The place of real resistance was taken by a legal fiction of a potential resistance that did not materialize because of the communist terror.

In the course of the day-long parliamentary debate, it was precisely this point that attracted the most attention. The leader of the Communist Party of Bohemia and Moravia Jiří Svoboda dwelt on the issue of “collective innocence”⁴⁰ implied by the declaration, which was to him “a cheap excuse and confirmation of dangerous national illusion, which follow through our history: an illusion that it is enough to join the winners in the right time and condemn the losers to gain a share in a moral victory.” Pavel Dostál⁴¹ provided a concrete example of the problematic nature of the concept of “collective innocence” when he reminded one of the most militant supporters of the declaration, Milan Pohanka, from the Civic Democratic Forum (*Občanská demokratická strana*, ODS), that he, five years ago, sentenced a group of young people to unconditional imprisonment for damaging a bust of Klement Gottwald. Miloš Zeman then suggested that instead of the declaration a moral tribunal should be set up to judge not only the communist era, but also concrete crimes and criminals. The Left also suggested the establishment of a specialized historical institute, which would study and evaluate this period. A proposal to incorpo-

⁴⁰ The term was used by the deputy Bohumil Tichý (HSD-SMS).

⁴¹ Pavel Dostál and Miloš Zeman were members of the newly established Club of Deputies of Social Democratic Orientation.

rate a reflection on the Prague Spring was suggested several times, but it contradicted both basic principles of the suggested declaration: a) the communist regime was totalitarian by its nature and b) any attempts at changing it were futile.

The discussion showed repeatedly that it was not clear *whose* communism was judged. The communist deputies pointed out the plurality of life experiences under communism, where people not only suffered or were morally degraded, but also “just simply lived, worked, had fun, raised children and realized their dreams and ideals.”⁴² The Moravian autonomists demanded that the declaration should recognise that the greatest communist crime was the dissolution of Moravian and Silesian Land as a legal entity.⁴³ A deputy of the separatist Slovak National Party, Juraj Molnár, argued that the communist regime was illegitimate only in Slovakia, where in 1946 the democratic parties won the election, and that it was forced on Slovakia by “Czech communists and their Slovak collaborators.” Furthermore, he argued that this historical lesson should lead the Slovak nation to consistently defend its right to self-determination. Such a Slovak version of the communist past, however, clashed with the Hungarian version, which was presented accidentally by a deputy with the same surname, Ladislav Molnár, who questioned the legitimacy of the 1946 election in Slovakia—as it excluded citizens of Hungarian nationality.

Despite all the objections, the ODA proved that it could set the tone of the public debate regarding communism and concurrently win over a majority of the deputies. Though it failed to capture the plurality of communist parties present in the parliament and was not “a pearl of stylistic art,”⁴⁴ the declaration was changed only slightly and passed smoothly. Most of the deputies followed the logic of Albert Černý that “the one who does not condemn evil, tolerates evil,” and a mere twenty hands went up against the declaration.

This “leading role” of the ODA in the field of dealing with the past climaxed two years later with the passing of an act on the “Illegality of the Communist Regime and on the Resistance Against It,” which copies the

⁴² The parliamentary speech of Miroslav Grebeníček. See *Společná česko-slovenská digitální parlamentní knihovna*, FS 1990–1992–stenoprotokoly, 15. společná schůze SL a SN, 23. 5. 1991 (<http://www.psp.cz/eknih/index.htm>).

⁴³ The parliamentary speech of Vladimír Váňa, see footnote nr. 42. The Moravian nationalist deputies were evoking the Declaration of the Federal Assembly of May 9, 1990 and of the Czech National Council of May 15, 1990, which claimed that the abolishment of Moravian-Silesian Land was an act of the totalitarian regime.

⁴⁴ The parliamentary speech of Jan Sokol, see footnote nr. 42.

logic and many formulations of the declaration.⁴⁵ This law, presented to the Czech parliament in June 1993 by ODA deputy Ivan Mašek, added some practical steps of retroactive justice to the declaration, in particular the revocation of the statute of limitations for crimes committed between 1948 and 1989. The proposal also tried to simplify restitution claims (claimants no longer had to prove that they were under pressure when they agreed to transfer their property), but ODS rejected the clause and the law was passed without it. In addition to this clause, the proposal of ODA deputy Čestmír Hofhanzl to incorporate a new article saying: “By the date this law comes into force, the Communist Party is banned” was not approved, one of the main reasons being that there was no party with such a name registered in the Czech Republic.⁴⁶

The Break-up of the State

It was not the campaign for “dealing with the past,” but the uncompromising stand towards the Slovak demands that caused the ODA to gain in popularity and secured its new leader Jan Kalvoda with the highest number of preferential points in the 1992 election. It became the defining feature that separated the ODA from its main rival, the Civic Democratic Party. In his TV pre-election campaign, Jan Kalvoda was concerned that voters might not be able to distinguish between the two similarly sounding right-wing parties, so he claimed that even Vladimír Mečiar would be able to see the difference between the two parties: he would be able to make a deal with the ODS, but not with the ODA.⁴⁷

Many of the ODA’s political opponents therefore accused it of chauvinism and breaking up the common state for the sake of its own political survival. Miloš Zeman for instance claimed: “The greatest threat for the common state could come from the Czech National Council, where the ODA, somewhat upset by their failure on the federal level, will do anything to realize the last idea that they still have: If my opponent wins in one part of a common state, it is necessary to break away from that

⁴⁵ Explanatory memorandum of the Act on Illegality of the Communist Regime and on Resistance Against It (Document PS PČR 1993–1996, 376) directly takes over Pavel Bratinka’s line of argument about the illegitimacy of the communist regime that he used during the debate about the Declaration in 1991. see footnote nr. 42.

⁴⁶ *Společná česko-slovenská digitální parlamentní knihovna*, PS 1993–1996. stenoprotokoly, 11. schůze, 9 July 1993 (<http://www.psp.cz/eknih/index.htm>).

⁴⁷ *A USD, SD, ODA*, box 18, Volební spoty ODA 1992 (VHS 1).

part.”⁴⁸ It is also true that the ODA was not unwilling to use the nationalist Sudeten-German card against the ODS.⁴⁹ Yet the ideological foundations of the ODA and overwhelming majority of its political standpoints (Roma minority,⁵⁰ immigration, European integration) were far removed from chauvinism. Its fierce anti-Slovak position has to be understood as part of an intellectual world of political anti-communism and politics of “dealing with the past.”

The economic transformation, according to ODA, meant a radical departure from the communist past and, as such, it would be opposed by the former communists by any means available. The Slovak issue became the biggest obstacle of rapid economic transformation, so it inevitably had to be the work of the “left-wing forces.” A common proclamation of the ODA, KAN and the Movement of Czechoslovak Understanding from March 1991 warned that in various Slovak parties and movements “former communists are becoming active,” including Vladimír Mečiar, and they “aspire to the breaking-up of Czechoslovakia and taking over power.”⁵¹ Instead of pro-European radical economic reform, those former communists were introducing a “sort of perestroika,” with the aim of preserving the communist economic system. The final goal of this policy was to politically disintegrate Central Europe, so it could be ruled again from outside. It is telling that the proclamation’s authors saw the way out of the constitutional crisis through the immediate lustration of all constitutional figures.⁵²

The proximity of nationalism and communism according to the ODA had deeper roots than a pragmatic misuse of national feelings from the side of the former *nomenklatura*. “The conflict between national and civil (citizen) principle, the conflict between collectivism and respect towards the individual reveals the very heart of the conflict between communism

⁴⁸ Dimun and Hamerský, *10 let na straně svobody*, 47.

⁴⁹ Ibid, 70–71.

⁵⁰ Nevertheless, even the friendly attitude towards the Roma was part of the anti-communist world-view. For instance Petr Pavlovský defends Roma against the racist attacks by stressing their “permanent civil disobedience” under communism: “Roma is in fact the only group of the population which the communists did not manage to subdue. There were very few Roma in *nomenklatura* and they managed to resist the communist ways extremely successfully. They could maintain their life style only partly, but they preserved the original value hierarchy. They did not allow themselves to be corrupted by material advantages and it was impossible to appeal to their ambition.” P. Pavlovský, “Racionální kořeny našeho „sametového“ rasismu a šovinismu,” in *Chod'te vpravo!*, 8–11.

⁵¹ A ÚSD, SD, ODA, karton 1, „Prehlásenie,” March 9, 1991.

⁵² Ibid.

and democracy,” says the seven-point declaration of the ODA from March 1992.⁵³ The conflict took the form of a clash of civilizations as eloquently described in the article “Into which Europe?” by leading ODA figure and one of its key publicists Petr Pavlovský.⁵⁴ In the piece, he argues that two parallel processes were occurring on the European continent. While Western Europe is integrating “as one state composed of regions” on the basis of citizenship, the Eastern, predominantly Orthodox Europe, goes exactly the opposite direction of constituting national states from above, “from the unclear collective entity called nation.” “It seems,” writes Pavlovský, “that those two concepts clashed here, on our territory, and in their differences we should see the source of all the centrifugal tendencies in both parts of our so-far common state.” The idea of the “left-wing nature” of nationalism was an important element in the political thought and self-understanding of the ODA, which complemented the existing scheme of conflict between the Left of the past and Right of the future, and enabled it to interpret it as a fatal conflict between East and West. Before the next election in 1996, the ODA visualized this perspective in an animated campaign ad. It depicts a group of voters being pulled apart by the governing coalition (from the right side) and opposition (from the left). A zoomed out view overlooking the continent revealed the bipolar pressure on this group to be, in fact, a tension between Europe and Asia.⁵⁵

The crisis of the common state was not rooted, according to the ODA, in a different economic and social development (Kroupa said: “I do not accept that the state breaks down because the Czech and Slovak societies were radically different”),⁵⁶ nor in the political practice of the interwar First Republic or Slovak fascist state, but in the 1968 constitutional amendment. The goal of the amendment allegedly was not to “create a functional system based on democratic principles, but to demonstrate to the world that here a social order was born that will sort out all the eternal problems of humanity.”⁵⁷ Specifically, “the root of all the troubles” lay in the minority veto, which gave a decisive role to “a small group of opposition members of parliament.”⁵⁸ The principal failure of the Velvet Revolution, says Kroupa, was that it did not abolish the communist constitution

⁵³ Dimun and Hamerský, *10 let na straně svobody*, 34.

⁵⁴ P. Pavlovský, “Do které Evropy?” in *Chod'te vpravo!*, 24–25.

⁵⁵ *A ÚSD, SD, ODA, karton 18, Volební spot ODA 1996 (VHS 2).*

⁵⁶ Kroupa, *Svoboda a řád*, 83.

⁵⁷ D. Kroupa, “Rozpadání Československa a návrat českého státu,” *Literární noviny* 3, 28 (1992), 1, 3.

⁵⁸ Kroupa, *Svoboda a řád*, 32.

and did not temporarily use the constitution of the interwar First Republic.⁵⁹ Kroupa thus argues in a way exactly opposite to many Civic Forum leaders, for whom it was precisely the position of Slovakia that presented a strong argument for preservation of the federal constitution. Again we see the revolutionary spirit of the ODA, as Kroupa is not bothered by the far-reaching consequences of his proposal, failing to consider what would happen to the two national republics, their National Councils, their governments, who would elect the new president, etc. The ODA presented several constitutional proposals with the aim of abolishing the minority veto and constituting a bicameral parliament, in which national interests would be represented just by the same number of Czech and Slovak deputies in one of the chambers. A law could be blocked only by all Czech or all Slovak deputies, not merely by their majorities.⁶⁰ Petr Pavlovský came up with a different idea: the Czech Republic, this “Greek Gift of president Husák,” would dissolve itself and transfer its powers to the federal institutions.⁶¹ After the 1992 election, the logical outcome of these views was the effort to break-up the state as quickly as possible. And the efforts to revert or slow down the process of dissolution—such as voting against the law on dissolution of the federation in the Federal Assembly—was called by the political council of the ODA “the dangerous result of the effort of the left-wing forces.”⁶²

Privatization

For the ODA political leaders nourished by Hayek’s neoliberalism, the liberation from the communist past was possible only if a “complete break-down of economic power of the communist state” was achieved.⁶³ Therefore, for the ODA, privatization was not an economic measure aimed at increasing the efficiency of existing state companies, but was a radical political and moral act, which would give birth both to “little islands of freedom” of private ownership and to the market that would enable their interaction.

⁵⁹ Ibid, 27.

⁶⁰ Ibid, 33. This proposal from January 1992 ignored the fact that the Czechs would be able to exploit the political tension between the majority Slovaks and minority Hungarians in Slovakia.

⁶¹ P. Pavlovský, “Česká republika—danajský dar” in *Chod'te vpravo!*, 31–32.

⁶² Dimun and Hamerský, *10 let na straně svobody*, 52.

⁶³ Husák, *Budování kapitalismu v Čechách*, 195.

The central role that the ODA ascribed to the principle of ownership is best captured by a booklet called *Ethics and Ownership* by Viktor Dobal, which was published by a right-wing think tank in 1994 and which has since then been repeatedly quoted by leading ODA politicians to defend privatization.⁶⁴ Dobal, who was not a neoliberal economist but a dissident with a Catholic background, summed up the basic neoconservative arguments defending property as a base of personal freedom. First of all, the ownership of one's own body constitutes a person as an independently acting individual, who by appropriating other things is mastering the world around himself. The concept of ownership thus plays the same role as does the concept of labour in Marxism: it constitutes man as a distinctive biological species. Or to sum up in the words of Viktor Dobal "to have precedes to be; if I do not have, I do not exist."⁶⁵ Ownership represents the right to a thing, which excludes the right of any other person and thus constitutes a basic dimension of individual freedom. Any limit on the right of ownership therefore constitutes an attack on freedom of the individual. "The modern era," writes Dobal, "is unfortunately one big and expanding attack on private ownership, and thus also an attack on human personality." According to Dobal, respect for the right of ownership is also at the root of all the Ten Commandments: in the first three, God is declaring his ownership, the fourth guards the ownership of parents, and all the remaining commandments are principally prohibitions of attacks against the property of others, because "adultery in the context of polygamy and concubinage is a theft of private property."

On the level of practical policy, the ODA's privatization policy was executed primarily by Tomáš Ježek, who came from nearly identical theoretical premises. Tomáš Ježek worked in the Institute of Economy of the Academy of Sciences, published in samizdat, and, for an exile publishing house, translated Hayek's works *Road to Serfdom* and *Law, Legislation and Liberty*. After the Velvet Revolution, he became an advisor to the Federal Minister of Finance Václav Klaus, one of the authors of voucher privatization. Thanks to the contacts with Petr Pithart from the dissident environment, he became a Czech minister for "administration of state property and its privatization" (Ježek insisted on inclusion of the words "and its privatization" into the name of the ministry) after the June 1990 election. He sided with Klaus's Federal Ministry of Finance and its concept of rapid privatization in opposition to the Vice-Chairman of the

⁶⁴ V. Dobal, *Etika a vlastnictví* (Prague: Občanský institut, 1994).

⁶⁵ Ibid, 10.

Czech Government František Vlasák, who was favouring a more gradual approach. Thanks to Ježek, the ODA could style itself as economically avant-garde, “more radical than the ministry of Mr. Klaus,” which could better withstand the political pressure to slow down economic reforms and could create pressure of its own so “[Klaus] retreats as little as possible.”⁶⁶

Nevertheless in the second half of 1991, Ježek became critical of the methods and the speed of the voucher privatization. He managed to postpone the start of the privatization and competing privatization projects could be submitted. Part of these privatization projects were also alternatives to voucher privatization, such as opening up the privatization process to direct foreign investors or maintaining part of the company in the Fond of National Property. Ježek’s other steps also led to a weakened role of the voucher privatization, in particular the successful proposal of the “small restitution” law literally a few days after taking office and—under pressure from Václav Havel—the launching of “small privatization,” which cut a significant piece of the pie from state companies designated for the voucher privatization.⁶⁷ The fact that these laws were passed by the parliament literally hours after being presented illustrates the revolutionary nature of these steps, as well as the influence the ODA had in the parliament.⁶⁸ After the next election in June 1992, revengeful Klaus forced the ODA to choose a different minister for privatization and Ježek was demoted to a lesser position.

Privatization for Ježek was not merely an economic measure, but a crucial step in breaking free from the communist era with almost metaphysical qualities. As with the other ODA “founding fathers,” Ježek found the idea of privatization based in religion. It was a realization of “God’s plan.” Ježek claimed that the “ultimate test of relevance of any scientific knowledge is its compliance with Scripture.”⁶⁹ Therefore, he tries through

⁶⁶ “Nejsme političtí provokatéři. Rozhovor s D. Kroupou,” *Respekt* 1, 32 (1990), quoted in Dimun and Hamerský, *10 let na straně svobody*, 19. For a cult of neo-liberal economists, see for instance P. Pavlovský, “Od poroučení větru a dešti k předpovědi počasí,” *Literární noviny* 2, 3 (1991): 2, where he says: “Philosophers (yes, philosophers) of our economy are now again trying to explain the world and the changing of the world they leave up to us.”

⁶⁷ Dušan Tříška considered restitutions as an “attack from the right” on the voucher privatization, see D. Tříška, “Privatizace a kapitalismus v České republice,” *Revue Politika* 4, 1 (2006), <http://www.cdk.cz/tp/clanky/292/privatizace-a-kapitalismus-v-ceske-republice> (accessed January 4, 2014).

⁶⁸ Husák, *Budování kapitalismu v Čechách*, 105, 137–191.

⁶⁹ Ježek, *Ježkovy voči*, 57–69.

a series of quotations to prove that Hayek's liberalism corresponds with biblical texts. The market system, he says, "fits the human being perfectly as it was created by Our Lord,"⁷⁰ and by contrast, the state planning is the work of the devil.

Ježek interpreted the conflict between the economists of the Federal and the Czech Government before the 1990 election as a dispute concerning the historical relationship to the communist heritage. The conflict was not about the final outcome of the economic transformation—for all the economists the prospering Western economy was the example to be imitated—but in the understanding of the starting position.⁷¹ The image of the *tabula rasa* was used again to construct the vision of a new economic system built on a green field. State property was for Ježek "a shapeless mass of common property" or "a dead property of the state."⁷² The absence of private property not only deformed economic relations, but also created an economic wasteland. Citizens, too, seemed to be untouched by the knowledge of market mechanisms, and the greatest advantage of small privatization was, according to Ježek, the fact that it became a "major social spectacle," in which people could "each weekend in each small town observe the market forces at work and learn how to understand them."⁷³ This idea of the *tabula rasa* enabled Ježek to assume the role of a heroic fighter against the forces of evil. He thus advised his fictitious follower: "Be aware that you have embarked upon a road that no one has ever undertaken, and you have to use methods that no one ever tried. Therefore, be not afraid of solitude."⁷⁴

"The over-all purpose of the privatization process," said Ježek when he took office in June 1990, "ought to be as rapid as possible a substantial reduction of the state property and distribution of the ownership structure among large numbers of citizens." All the other roles of privatization, such as improvement of company liquidity, attraction of foreign investment and know-how, and the redemption of "past debt," such as poor state of infrastructure or environmental damage, were only secondary. The voucher method of privatization resonated best with the neoliberal concept of "withering away of the state," because it deprived the state not

⁷⁰ Husák, *Budování kapitalismu v Čechách*, 15.

⁷¹ T. Ježek, *Zrození ze zkumavky: Svědectví o české privatizaci 1990–1997* (Prague: Prostor, 2007), 43.

⁷² *Ibid.*, 31, 45.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, 61. In fact the auctions were not a school of market mechanism, in most cases there was no bidding and the properties were sold for a put-up price.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 14.

only of the ownership of the companies, but also of its capital. Tomáš Ježek described how the idea of voucher privatization emerged at a meeting of economists at Koloděje Castle in February 1990: "During the lunch break we walked with Dušan Tříška through the park and the idea of voucher privatization occurred to us. We had discussed the problem already a couple of times in the past. We kept returning to the dilemma, that if we sell everything, the power of the state would remain the same, it would have no houses, factories, etc. but it would have the cash. But we wanted the power of the state to dramatically decrease."⁷⁵

When privatization was discussed in July 1990 by the Czech National Council, the opponents objected that the voucher privatization would create only a formal ownership without the power to effectively influence the companies' management and that it would deprive the country of foreign investments. To the first objection, Ježek responded that "this standard socialist argument" is led by a desire "to restore society as a closely-knit and easily understandable group of people."⁷⁶ To answer the second objection, Ježek did not use the nationalist argument that the "family silver" needs to be preserved (though he coined the phrase), but argued that a functioning market must be established first and that would create a ground for foreign investors. Thanks to the voucher privatization, the foreign investors would not have to negotiate complicated deals with the state, but they could deal directly with the public companies. The foreign investments thus would as a result "substantially decentralise and would operate on market basis."⁷⁷

One of the main arguments for the voucher privatization was its speed. The greatest danger for privatization came from staying in the "valley of death" between the planned and market economy. With every delay the threat increased that the "opposition forces" would interfere with privatization and "lead it astray." The stress on the speed of the process was in sharp contrast with the ODA's later demand for an effective legal framework for the transformation; yet in 1990 and the first half of the subsequent year, the ODA did not realize that it was exactly the speed of the

⁷⁵ Husák, *Budování kapitalismu v Čechách*, 102. From this perspective, it is also irrelevant who the new owner is. He said: "I attended a few auctions personally and I noticed how nervous people were that these strange faces are getting all the property. My heart was breaking but nothing could have been done about it. Only now, when the revenue offices and other standard institutions are finally working, the tide is turning." Ibid, 215.

⁷⁶ Ježek, *Zrození ze zkumavky*, 216.

⁷⁷ Husák, *Budování kapitalismu v Čechách*, 143.

privatization that created an environment for capturing decision-making by key interest groups.⁷⁸

Tomáš Ježek, at least during his term as a minister, did not constitute an exception among the leaders of the ODA. According to Jiří Skalický, his successor at the ministry, the privatization constituted the very “moral dimension” of the reforms; it was “the natural base of the ethos of the reform process.” Regardless of the economic effects, the will to transfer the property into private hands alone became “fundamentally the ethical act of the transformation.”⁷⁹ Skalický, therefore, argued against the institute of “public interest” and claimed that it should not limit the rights of the future owners (for instance in the privatization of healthcare institutions). Similarly the privatization was not to shape the “optimal economic structure.” Its role was to create “islands of freedom” protecting the individual from the power of the state.

Restitution and the Law on Land

In the political battle for restitution, the ODA scored a convincing victory. Despite resistance from Václav Klaus and a substantial part of the ODS, it managed to push through its own idea of this process in the form of a law on extrajudicial rehabilitations in February 1991. Essentially, the dispute was about where the “thick line” would be drawn; while Václav Klaus argued for November 17, 1989, the ODA managed to push it all the way back to February 25, 1948. The ODA, at that time at least, did not see the restitutions as a part of the economic reform, but as an issue of historical justice that had to be done even at the expense of privatization speed.⁸⁰ Later, however, the ODA saw the restitutions as the best method of finding a new responsible owner of former state property. Initially the ODA demanded that only private persons could demand restitution of their property and that corporations should be excluded. It demanded that the émigrés and Jews affected by Nazi policy of “Aryanization” should also

⁷⁸ It is telling that most of the extensive debate about the investment privatization funds centred on the issue whether the communist secret service informers can sit in their boards.

⁷⁹ J. Skalický, “Základní etika privatizace,” *Zpravodaj ODA* 4 (1995): 8.

⁸⁰ Declaration of the 1st All-State Conference of ODA, 20 October 1990: “If we want to re-establish trust in untouchable ownership rights, we have to push through the redress of all the confiscations even though ... this will complicate the process of privatization.” See Dimun and Hamerský, *10 let na straně svobody*, 20.

have the right to apply (although in the first case the debate was whether Czechoslovak citizenship should be a necessary condition, and in the second whether the “thick line” of 1948 should be stepped over).⁸¹ As far as the church restitutions were concerned, the ODA’s position was initially close to the reluctant ODS and stressed the need for a smooth privatization process, but since 1993, the ODA moved closer to the position of the Catholic parties.⁸²

The transformation of agriculture caused an even sharper political conflict, which was personalized as a clash between Czech Prime Minister Petr Pithart and his Minister of Agriculture Bohumil Kubát. Kubát, the (future) member of the ODA, claimed that “oppression is still going on in the villages,” and that the rightful owners of the land will “establish their own order after the restitutions.”⁸³ Pithart accused Kubát of seeing “agriculture as a battlefield, in which the good struggle against the evil, the men of honour against the villains.”⁸⁴ As with the other policies of economic transformation, this was not about reforming one segment of the economy, but was part of a struggle against “the old structures.” When the ODS agreed to recall Kubát from his post, the ODA gave him full political support and made him an election leader in Southern Bohemia in 1992. Regardless of Kubát’s political adventures (which cost the ODA dearly in the election), the ODA was very radical on this issue and supported the so-called 3T law⁸⁵ on land with the goal of thorough restitution of agricultural land, the break-up of the agricultural cooperative structures and their replacement by small-scale family farms. In this, the ODA opposed the proposal of the federal government, which favoured the existing agricultural cooperatives. Petr Pavlovský, for instance, took issue with Pithart’s claim that “the countryside should decide about its own future,” saying that the agricultural cooperatives have no right to influence the shape of the transformation, because they were essentially “state farms in disguise;”⁸⁶ they were “agricultural mass production plants created through violence and theft,”⁸⁷ whose members have the same right to the land as

⁸¹ The law was proposed by ODA deputy Viktor Dobal.

⁸² For the position of ODS, see A. Gjuríčová, “Poněkud tradiční rozchod s minulostí: Občanská demokratická strana” in A. Gjuríčová et al., *Rozdělení minulosti*, 107–134.

⁸³ *A ÚSD*, SD, ODA, karton 18, Volební spot ODA 1992 (VHS 1).

⁸⁴ Dimun and Hamerský, *10 let na straně svobody*, 30.

⁸⁵ Proposal of deputies Tomášek, Tlustý and Tyl.

⁸⁶ P. Pavlovský, “Komu patří naše zemědělství?” in *Chod'te vpravo!*, 81–82.

⁸⁷ P. Pavlovský, “Patří družstva družstevníkům?,” *Literární noviny* 2, 40 (1991): 2. It is a response to V. Klaus, “Naši novodobí fyziokraté” in *Literární noviny* 2, 37 (1991): 1.

workers to the factory they work in. In the same breath, however, the ODA insisted that the state has a duty to keep subsidizing agriculture, because as Čestmír Hofhanzl put it, “the agricultural landscape creates a living environment for the entire population. If it is well cultivated, if good people are living on it, who want to work and are aware of the value of labour, then that translates into the high morals and attitude to life of the entire state.”⁸⁸

The End of the Anti-communism of the Future

The relationship of the ODA to its stronger partner, the ODS, underwent a dramatic development in the first half of the nineties. From its very beginning, the ODA constituted an independent unit in the framework of the Civic Forum, which on the one hand gave it a chance to establish early on its own political identity, but on the other hand it barred it from access to the financial and, more importantly, human resource aspects of the movement. Even before the June 1990 election, the leaders of the ODA predicted the break-up of the Civic Forum and considered it a necessary pre-condition for the establishment of one strong right-wing party. Despite the fact that after the 1990 election the ODA played an important role in the parliaments, shaped the agenda of the politics of history and had a strong influence over the shape of the economic reform, it could not, with only a few dozen members at the end of 1990, become the nucleus of a future large right-wing party. Yet the ODA did support the establishment of a strong right-wing force as a barrier against the Left and planned to become either part or supporter of it in the role of junior coalition partner.⁸⁹ At the so called farewell congress of the Civic Forum in February 1991, ODA leader Pavel Bratinka encouraged the delegates: “Enter into ODS, and if that does not suit you, there is still ODA for you to join.”⁹⁰ Similarly in a later interview Bratinka stressed the need for a mass party and complained, “to our displeasure we realised that many people are not willing to join such a party for various reasons.” Therefore, the ODA

⁸⁸ Hofhanzl, *Tak pravil Čestmír Hofhanzl*, 56; P. Pavlovský, “Potřebujeme své vlastní zemědělství?” in *Chod'te vpravo!*, 78–79.

⁸⁹ Kroupa, *Svoboda a řád*, 30: “ODA supported the break-up of OF, we were meeting Václav Klaus at the ministry of finances and were preparing the future organizational structure ... during the discussions about the profile of the party it appeared that such a union would not work and would break up.”

⁹⁰ Dimun and Hamerský, *10 let na straně svobody*, 24.

would play a role of substitute right-wing alternative for right-wing activists and voters who “cannot stand the idea of a mass party.”⁹¹

In the same way that ODA maintained a certain basic revolutionary consensus before the 1990 election, it also maintained a transformation consensus before the 1992 election against “invasion of the Left and the forces of chaos into the Czech Lands.”⁹² Its election poster from May 1992 represents the approaching election as a fatal conflict: “Should the anti-reform forces win in these parliamentary election, it would separate our economy from the Western world, it would mean the end of reform and backwardness for this country for long decades.”⁹³ Neither the increasing tensions between the ODA and ODS concerning the politics of history, in particular the issue of restitution of property, nor direct political battle for the office of Prague mayor, led to an open ideological conflict between both right-wing parties, who even signed a formal pre-election “non-aggression” pact at the end of 1991.

The ODA changed its policy towards the ODS in the second half of 1993, especially in reaction to Klaus’s famous statement in October 1993: “The economic reform has ended and the principal reform steps have been taken in this country.”⁹⁴ Daniel Kroupa points to this statement as the moment when he realised that the ODA will have to stand directly against the policies of the ODS, which seemed to be satisfied with the current state of affairs and did not intend to continue with radical transformation of society in non-economic spheres.⁹⁵ The ODA accused the ODS that by limiting the reform to only the economy, it resembled Marxism, seeing the economy as a “base” above which “looms a superstructure of sorts.”⁹⁶ The ODA claimed that the liberalism of the ODS was “fake” or “pragmatic” (as opposed to their own “conservative” liberalism) because it blindly believed in an all-powerful market and neglected the legal framework of the privatization. According to Kroupa, during the normalization, pragmatic liberals, such as Václav Klaus, had to “publicly renounce their moral position, i.e. their resistance to foreign occupation and call it instead “brotherly help.” Today these people, he continues, “accommodate to the existing governing

⁹¹ “Musíme se chovat zpřímá... (Rozhovor s Pavlem Bratinkou),” *Fórum*, March 13–19, 1991, quoted in Dimun and Hamerský, *10 let na straně svobody*, 24.

⁹² *A ÚSD*, SD, ODA, karta 1, prohlášení Jana Kalvody „ODA k volbám.”

⁹³ Ibid, election poster of 29 May 1992.

⁹⁴ “Ekonomická reforma skončila, řekl Václav Klaus” in *Hospodářské noviny* October 12, 1993.

⁹⁵ Kroupa, *Svoboda a řád*, 77.

⁹⁶ Mašek, *Tak pravil Ivan Mašek*, 35.

ideology and jump on the bandwagon of right-wing politics and will stay there as long as there is hope that this ideological background will ease their path to power.”⁹⁷ In the eyes of the ODA, the ODS turned from the guarantor of a radical break with the communist past into a “lift to power” for “the old structures” and “*nomenklatura* brotherhoods.” It was not until the mid-1990s that the critique of the privatization process and of the economic reform as such appeared. The ODA came up with the term “bank socialism” to describe the incestuous ownership of former state companies by state-owned banks. Kalvoda criticised the loss of dynamism of the reforms: “most public affairs are not commanded by elected, politically responsible figures but by bureaucrats, and the companies are not controlled by owners but by managers in various ownership entanglements.”⁹⁸

In terms of election results, this strategy was not particularly effective, not just because the ODA had been too closely linked with the initial steps of the reform. More importantly, the electorate perceived the ODA entirely differently than the ODA leadership wished. The repeated large scale surveys that ODA commissioned confirmed the long-term trend in voter perception that placed the ODA in the centre-right of the political spectrum between the Peoples Party and the ODS. The voters perceived the ODA as a diet ODS. For instance, a survey of 1996 showed that the ODA was perceived as a party, which, more than the ODS, cared for the social effects of the economic reform on the citizens and strengthened their national feelings.⁹⁹ The ODA would also receive twice as many of the hypothetical second votes of the social-democratic voters than the Communist Party. By contrast, when asked which party tries hardest to remove communists from influential posts, 25% of the respondents listed the ODS and only 15% the ODA. The party leadership was surprised already by the previous survey from 1993, which showed that most ODA sympathizers consider themselves “liberals” and most ODS supporters “conservatives.”¹⁰⁰ This dissonance between the party’s self-under-

⁹⁷ Kroupa, *Svoboda a řád*, 27.

⁹⁸ Dimun and Hamerský, *10 let na straně svobody*, 126.

⁹⁹ Ibid, 122.

¹⁰⁰ “Postavení ODA,” *Zpravodaj ODA* (únor-březen 1993): 1–2. The very self-definition of ODA as “conservative” party is problematic. Though most of the “founding fathers” were Catholics, they were Prague liberal intellectuals. For instance, Ivan Mašek (twice divorced) expressed opinions that were fairly removed from a conservative canon: he was against the death penalty, the ban on abortion (“it is not true that the life of a foetus is equal to life after birth”), he was for the legalization of soft drugs, prostitution and euthanasia in specific circumstances. Mašek, *Tak pravil Ivan Mašek*, 29–33.

standing and its voters is also confirmed by the fact that less than 5% of the electorate regularly attended church services (over 60% in the case of the Peoples Party).

The dispute over the nature and future perspective of the transformation also resulted in a growing split inside the ODA between its pragmatic and conservative wings, which were thus far united by the belief in a neoliberal solution of the communist heritage. The financial crisis of spring 1997 was the last straw for the ailing neoliberal consensus of the Czech Right. The bond that tied the two camps of the ODA together was broken. Despite the fact that the crisis of 1997 seemingly confirmed the ODA critique of the ODS (absence of a legal framework of the economic transformation and half-hearted privatization resulting in “bank socialism”), it was eventually the ODA and not the ODS who fell victim to it. Also in this time, the ODA, due to the weakened position of the ODS, managed to push through more of its principal points than ever before, especially as part of the second austerity package. One of the main reasons for the fall of the ODA was the fact that it entered the crisis without strong leadership following the resignation of Jan Kalvoda over his law degree misuse in December 1996. His resignation speech—for that matter, the resignation speeches of all of the ODA leaders became its own genre and a type of communication strategy—was a sign of how far the ODA had moved from, in Jan Kalvoda words, the “optimistic vision of heroic times of the early nineties.”¹⁰¹ Kalvoda distanced himself from the term “transformation” and suggested that the politicians should rather speak about a “policy of healing” for the ailing society. The conservative metaphor of recovery evoked the idea of a “healthy” starting point and contained also “the humility resulting from the admission of the existence of the illness.”¹⁰² Kalvoda’s cure, however, still operated in the transformation discourse; he demanded the end of the “traditional barking of the ODA within the limits of the law,” and a sort of *Flucht nach Vorn* or a forward escape in the form of a “new political definition of Czech society” including the radical reform of all aspects of social life.

Following Kalvoda’s resignation, Michael Žantovský, who had entered the party just six weeks beforehand, was elected with a convincing majority as the new leader of the ODA. His election, however, deepened, rather than levelled, the frictions between both wings, and on April 16, 1997, the

¹⁰¹ For the full text of the speech, see Dimun and Hamerský, *10 let na straně svobody*, 149.

¹⁰² Ibid.

Right Faction was established with dozens of members headed by Ivan Mašek, the head of the ODA caucus in the Czech National Council and Čestmír Hofhanzl. In its founding document, *The Crisis of Responsibility*, the Right Faction described the current state of affairs as a “hang-over” caused by social crises of confidence in right-wing policy:

The government for a long time trumpeted principles that it failed to realize or realized only partly. This inconsistency led gradually to its departure from its own liberal economic program and the government abandoned further necessary reform steps. The crimes of the past were not settled. Restitution of property was not completed. Generally the reforms did not follow from a concise intellectual system in which the economy would have its balanced position. The result is an open crisis (...) pervasive corruption and legal marasmus, which under the cover of ‘entrepreneurship’ enabled the theft of billions of public property immune from prosecution, and caused therefore the ‘suffocating atmosphere’ accompanied by scepticism, cynicism, and apathy.”¹⁰³

The Right Faction called upon the responsible politicians and the prime minister in particular to “admit respective share of the guilt and accept political responsibility.”¹⁰⁴ According to the Right Faction, the last party conference paradoxically strengthened the liberal wing responsible for ODA’s share in the “crisis of responsibility,” which prevented a return to the original ODA program and forced the faction to become an oppositional platform inside the ODA.

New ODA leader Žantovský at first made light of the Right Faction, when he claimed that “the whole faction is a mere phantom, a horror movie character, the ‘undead’ of a voodoo cult. The cold mitt claws its proclamations, shadow spectres are gathering at its conventions, the breath of the dead whispers words into the ears of journalists.”¹⁰⁵ Nevertheless, in autumn 1997 it appeared that he was not able to cope with the pressure from the “conservative” wing of the ODA, and at the end of November, he was replaced by a compromise candidate, Jiří Skalický. This took place at the 13th party congress where the old conflict between the two wings escalated, which led to the rapid demise of the ODA as a relevant political force. The election of Miroslav Tošer, the controversial representative of the “pragmatic” wing, as a vice-chairman led Ivan Mašek and a number of his colleagues to leave the party. A half-hearted attempt at dealing with the scandal of suspicious party financing was the final

¹⁰³ For the proclamation, see Ibid, 164–166.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid, 190.

episode, which subsequently accelerated a massive exodus from the party headed by its leader Jiří Skalický beginning at the end of February.

The development of the ODA in the second half of the 1990s could be summed up as a move from anti-communism of the future to the politics of memory. After the disintegration of the common state and, in particular, following the debate about Klaus's statement that the reform had ended, the ODA started to campaign vigorously against the reform praxis of the ODS and the existing status quo. The struggle against communists was no longer a struggle against the opponents of rapid economic reform and privatization, but a struggle against the "inner enemy," former *no-menklatura*, who were trying to hijack the economic reform both in the state administration and political parties, in particular in the ODS. Such struggle logically turned inwards into the party, and the thorough effort to deal with the communist past led first to the split of the party into "conservative" and "pragmatic" wings and finally to its demise as a relevant political force in 1998.¹⁰⁶

The belief in neoliberal solutions to the transformation for a long time connected the pragmatists and conservatives inside the ODA despite principal differences in their biographies and resulting positions towards communism. Thus for the ODA, the crisis of 1997 did not mean a confirmation of its criticism of the absence of a legal framework or the half-hearted nature of the transformation measures, but quite on the contrary, it meant a questioning of the neoliberal consensus, which resulted in a shift from anti-communism of the future to the backward looking politics of memory; the vision of a stateless society vanished and was replaced by a look into the past, which became a tool of inner-party struggle. For instance, Ivan Mašek, in his conflict with Miroslav Tošer, did not mention any of the accusations of corruption, though there were quite a few, but he repeatedly stressed Tošer's "dark" past as a teacher of the Russian language and civic education at an elementary school.¹⁰⁷ Neoliberal consensus held together a unique and surprisingly powerful coalition of moral capital derived from dissidents with the technocratic legitimacy of right-wing economists. The coalition's end also meant the end of the only specific feature of the ODA that ensured its place in the Czech political space.

¹⁰⁶ For the after-life of ODA, see J. Štětka, "Nesmrtelný příběh ODA," *Ekonom* 53, 16 (23 April 2009): 38–42.

¹⁰⁷ Mašek, *Tak pravil Ivan Mašek*, 79.

Songs of Innocence and Songs of Experience

Polish Conservatism 1979–2011

RAFAŁ MATYJA

The intellectual and political history of Polish conservatism over the last quarter of a century is far more intriguing, colorful, and full of twists and paradoxes than that of the leftist-liberal hegemony. Though conservatism has not become the program of any significant political party, it has won itself an important place in the public debate concerning culture, custom, and attitudes towards history.

At the roots of Polish conservatism of the nineteenth century, we find a group of “*stańczyks*”¹: ironic, contrarian, thirty-something Poles who refused to give in to the emotional reaction of the failed 1863 insurrection. Similarly, the rebirth of the political Right was the work of individuals just as young and just as defiant. The building blocks of the conservative revival consisted of elements which were emblematic of Polish society as a whole: religious revival, increasing aspirations towards independence, the awareness of the “*longue durée*” of Polish identity,” and those elements which pertained to the young intelligentsia searching for their own forms of expression. These forms would cast aside both the decayed language of official propaganda and the attitudes of mainstream opposition elites, who linked socialist revisionism to the concept of human rights, trade unions, and grassroots democracy.

At the same time, from an intellectual point of view, conservatism was an interesting tradition, suggesting solutions to the problems of statehood, and a way of coping with the social and cultural changes that appeared during the reconstruction of Poland's ties to the West. Conservatism was also a means of interpreting transformations in the economy in a manner different from monetarism, which relied uniquely on economic arguments.

¹ The name comes from a collection of political pamphlets titled “*Stańczyk's Files*.” *Stańczyk* was a court jester for early 16th century Polish kings, renowned for his critical mind and his concern for the country's fate, which he exhibited alongside a blatant disregard for court arrangements.

However, conservative positions regarding one of the main historical processes that shaped it—modernization—were greatly varied.

The presentation of the circumstances of the conservative renaissance, of its creators and its social networks, which is the subject of this essay, must be accompanied by a reference to that of its many layers which reaches beyond the context of the fall of communism and the political changes of the nineties. It seems that the various conservative responses to modernization in countries lying outside economical and political centers, which nevertheless retained clear civilizing aspirations, are among the most inspiring intellectual offers—though eventually those responses would fall outside the formula of classical conservatism.

The Unique Career of Conservatism

Of all political movements under late socialism in Poland, conservatism was least predestined for a strong continuation. Already unpopular in the two decades separating the World Wars, conservatism in the post-war period was unrepresented among the émigré circles and, compared to the agrarians, Christian Democrats, and National Democrats, it had no political following in Poland itself. Conservatism lacked a charismatic leader to compete with Józef Piłsudski or Roman Dmowski and was dismissed by the intellectual elite, including those who opposed communism.

And yet, it was conservatism that became the intellectual language of the Polish Right. Though it did not create a separate party, its representation in politics was much stronger than the level of support in society would suggest. Despite lacking a strong political base, conservatives became ministers, speakers and vice-speakers of the Sejm. They were also represented in regional councils and in public media management.

Over the years, conservatives shaped the style of right-wing political journalism and became the most important polemicist of the main leftist-liberal intellectual lifestyle. Conservative media outlets were the most significant voice critical of the changes in government and politics and the dominant interpretations of culture, custom, and educational trends. Today, conservative publications constitute a large library of books, ample-sized magazines, translations, and academic publications.

All this happened despite the fact that, initially, the very possibility of remaining a conservative through nearly half a decade of communism seemed dubious. This question has often been asked of conservatives with the common intention of proving that they are not, in fact, conservative.

One such challenging article was written by Yale historian Timothy Snyder. "Aleksander Kwaśniewski is the most conservative politician in Poland (...)" wrote Snyder in 1997. "Not only does he embody a certain tradition, but he can represent it in a way that allows many Poles to use his political success to justify their own choices made during the People's Republic." Snyder's train of thought continues to be interesting, as he follows with: "[t]hese Poles, who call themselves conservatives, are quite willing to cut themselves free of such tendencies, and will instead call upon the tradition of Solidarity or the Second Republic.(...) A Polish conservative who believes that it is possible to select some 'true' traditions from all the legacy which is empirically out there, leans, in fact, towards the Western post-modernist way of thought."²

Tomasz Merta—one of the most interesting voices of the conservative opinion and vice-minister of culture in both liberal and conservative governments (one of the victims of the Smolensk plane crash of April 10th 2010)—argued, in turn, that "it is cognitively worthless to reduce conservatism to a simple preservative reflex" and that Snyder's definition makes it impossible to distinguish between a conservative and a pragmatic, who, guided by prudence (in itself a conservative virtue), is also quite capable of casting sceptical judgement on the potential success of abstract endeavours, and of making a stand against radical change." Merta goes on to explain that "a rebellion against the traditional mentality of the People's Republic of Poland (PRL) does not necessarily put conservatism to the test. PRL was neither a black hole, nor a period of annihilation of traditional social bonds and intermediate bodies. Though it is true that many were damaged, weakened, or forgotten, the situation was far from reaching anomie. (...) Not only did the opposition germinate—it bloomed, and that is because it was able to refer to certain ideals: robust family ties transmitting historical and ethical traditions, the ethos of Polish intelligentsia, and an incredibly strong and continuous religious tradition."³

To expand the subject of this controversy, we should recall the variants of the conservative attitude as described by one of the "founding fathers" of new Polish conservatism, Ryszard Legutko. The first variant defends reality "in the eternal sense," which is to say the religious and supernatural sense, while the second defends reality "in the sense of a lengthy historical process." The third version of conservatism, which Legutko con-

² T. Snyder, "Czy w Polsce są konserwatyści?," *Res Publica Nowa* 11 (1997): 48–49.

³ T. Merta, „Nieodzowność konserwatyzmu. W odpowiedzi Timothy Snyderowi,” *Res Publica Nowa* 11 (1997): 54.

siders marginal, is the attitude of “defending the direct and contemporary reality.”⁴ Legutko's classification reveals the two fundamental motives that led to the evolution of Polish conservatism. First, an attachment to religion or national tradition, which also serves to dissipate the doubts of Snyder and other opinion journalists who would imagine a conservatism that relates to a past only recently bygone.

In this sense, idealist and political conservatism has its background in social conservatism, which was a defining force in the struggle against communism. This conservatism was more than traditionalism: it was an active record and relay of the memory of past Poland, going back as far as the partitions of the nineteenth century. In that time, Polish identity was not guarded by governmental structure, but by a self-emergent social organization that took it upon itself to protect the cultural legacy. After 1944, it focused on preserving the truth about the Soviet aggression on Poland in 1939, the Katyń massacre, the passiveness of the Red Army during the Warsaw Uprising, and the manner of the communist conquest of the country.

In this context, it is important to note that the new conservatism was not simply a movement for historical legacy. It borrowed freely from the tradition of critical judgement of the national character, an important matter for nineteenth century Polish conservatism.

It must also be noted that fascination with conservatism was a generational issue. Those born directly after the war would soon discover conservatism as part of a wider heritage, but the next generation would accept it as an element of their own identity. The biggest cohort of conservative opinion journalists and politicians consists of individuals born in the sixties, though the precursors of the movement are several years older. Why did this particular generation find conservatism so attractive and adopt it as framework for various reasoned judgements?

The first virtue of the conservative thought was that it gave people a taste of historical transcendence and the possibility of intellectual escape from the dreary eighties while at the same time not requiring the abandonment of public issues. It offered ways to deal with a situation in which Poland's freedom and independence seemed to be a lost cause. The conservative ideal did not only give the possibility of separating oneself from the official world of the government but allowed the expression of weariness towards the language of the mainstream opposition. This language

⁴ R. Legutko, “Trzy konserwatyzmy” in *Etyka absolutna i społeczeństwo otwarte* (Cracow: Arcana, 1994), 110.

was an odd blend of socialist revisionism imbued with religious and patriotic symbols as well as trade-union rhetoric. Thus, relating to conservatism allowed one to avoid embroilment in the problematic socialist doctrine and countered trade unionism through a fascination with the economic solutions of Reagan and Thatcher. Conservatism could also be a political expression of the religious revival linked to the visits of Pope John Paul II. This conservatism emerged not as a reaction to some wave of modernity—as the customary interpretations of its origins and culture have it—but, on the contrary, as a search for a path out of the outdated model of communist domination, and as the pursuit of a vision of the future more refreshing than that which socialist revisionism could offer.

The Roots

Though the conservatives of the Third Republic of Poland would often call upon the old conservative ideal, their views were not a direct continuation of the tradition. The conservatives of the Second Republic did not bequeath them any organised groups or institutions, making it extremely difficult to identify individuals who might carry on the conservative approach to politics or culture. Even though Jerzy Giedroyc, editor of a pre-war weekly for young conservatives, established the émigré monthly *Kultura*, he often borrowed from Marxist revisionism, and he did not consider conservatism to be up-to-date.

Stanisław “Cat” Mackiewicz, one of the most important opinion journalists of the conservative inter-war period, a Sejm deputy, and prime minister of the immigrant government in the 1950s, decided to return to Poland (some effort was made by communist special agents to ensure this). On his return, he was given the opportunity to publish historical essays and books. Historical opinion journalism had become a way of expressing core conservative views on the *longue durée* of Polish identity.

Here ends the roll call for pre-war conservatives capable of influencing future generations. Unlike the Christian Democracy or the National Democracy, conservatives did not publish émigré journals or form unofficial groups in the country itself. They did not have eminent, historically significant leaders. Moreover, even the dissident intelligentsia considered conservatism and other rightist traditions to be unfashionable. Jacek Bartyzel wrote: “the right was hindered by the psychologically complex atmosphere of that period. Even beyond Poland and the communist bloc, there was a disgust for all that belonged to the Right. Those were the

times when, even in the West, 'Right' was a synonym for an 'inferior' form of morality and intelligence."

To call upon conservative traditions in this situation was an act of intellectual defiance not only against the official realm, but also against the social milieu of liberal and leftist intelligentsia.⁵ Only a select few would preserve the seeds of conservative tradition: Stefan Kisielewski, the former opinion journalist of *Tygodnik Powszechny*, and two literary critics and translators, Paweł Hertz and Henryk Krzeczkowski. It was their writing, but also their personal influence on the younger generation that helped the revival of the conservative way of thinking.

Krzeczkowski left an unquestionable mark on the book that signalled the revival of conservative thought, *Sylwetki polityczne XIX wieku* (The Nineteenth Century Political Profiles)⁶ written by Marcin Król and Wojciech Karpiński. This book was a collection of short biographies of eminent politicians and thinkers, most of them of a conservative persuasion. What today looks like a middling publication for an uninitiated young readership provoked a heated discussion in its day. As Aleksander Hall recalls: "This book was remarkable, because it was published in an atmosphere of incredible fear toward displaying national values."⁷

Well before the year 1980, Król had published a monograph of the conservative circles "Bunt Młodych" and "Polityka," active in the 1930s. In an overstatement, Król's books were taken to be a premonition of conservative reconstitution. Similarly, despite not being a rightist paper, the samizdat journal *Res Publica* published by Król was initially considered to be a conservative publication because it so vividly stood out from the leftist mainstream of the independent public opinion. This reputation followed Król through the period of Martial Law (13 December 1981). Due to his editions of articles by the Cracow "stańczyks," his references to the tradition of political realism, and finally his fascinating book *Konserwatyści a niepodległość* (Conservatives and Independence), Król was considered by many to be one of the most important figures of the Polish conservative tradition.

Statements by the Political Opinion Group⁸ would garner a similar reputation. The group, inspired by Król, formulated terms of compromise

⁵ J. Bartyzel, "Prawica w Polsce. Rodowód i teraźniejszość," *Polityka Polska* 9 (1987), 51.

⁶ W. Karpiński and M. Król, *Sylwetki polityczne XIX wieku* (Cracow: Znak, 1974).

⁷ Interview with Aleksander Hall by Ewa Polak, *Arka* 19 (1987), 61.

⁸ Grupa Publicystów Politycznych, "Trzy wystąpienia," *Krytyka* 18 (1984), 164–174.

with the enforcers of Martial Law that followed the conservative tradition of nineteenth century political realism. It was not until the *Res Publica* received permission for official publication that it was able to free itself of connotations of rightism. After 1989, the editors had several brief periods of political activity in the centrist-liberal parties. However, the myth of a cold, conservative intellectual circle attracted a large community of students and set the foundation for yet another conservative group that would become active in the late nineties.

The second group significant for the conservative revival, the Young Poland Movement (*Ruch Młodej Polski*, RMP), had a somewhat different genealogy. At the core, we find the student opposition of Gdańsk of the late '70s, the authors of the samizdat bi-monthly *Bratniak*. Their roots lie mainly in a fascination with the political traditions of the first decades of the twentieth century: above all the national-democratic movement, but also the thought of the Piłsudski camp and of the interwar conservatives. In time, the influence of the RMP grew to include most university towns, and its political position in the "Solidarity" movement was much greater than that of *Res Publica* intellectuals.

The RMP gained its political and intellectual independence thanks to its leader, Aleksander Hall, who clashed strongly with the leaders of the leftist opposition, Adam Michnik and Jacek Kuroń. The subject of these significant debates was the tradition of the National Democracy (*Narodowa Demokracja*, ND). Hall defended national-democratic traditions from being reduced to a mere accusation of anti-semitism. He also protested against burdening the nationalists of the Second Republic with responsibility for actions of the Polish United Workers' Party (*Polska Zjednoczona Partia Robotnicza*, PZPR) aimed at the Jewish population.⁹ Hall was especially inspired by the realistic trends in the National Democratic opinion in the 1893–1918 push for independence period, as well as by the concepts of national self-organization and national interest. He was clearly influenced by Wiesław Chrzanowski, an activist of the pre-war National Democracy, and later advisor to the Primate of Poland, Cardinal Stefan Wyszyński. Chrzanowski was in essence a political and ideological counsellor for many members of the RMP, and in 1989, he brought many of them together under the new party Christian National Union (*Zjednoczenie Chrześcijańsko-Narodowe*, ZChN). In independent Poland, Chrzanowski became the speaker of the Sejm and served as Minister of Justice.

⁹ A. Hall, "Polemika z <<Cieniami zapomnianych przodków>>," *Bratniak* 6-7 (1978), 14–16.

Still, there is a consensus among scholars of Polish political thought that the concept of a nation as defined by the RMP was not a simple continuation of the ideal presented by the National Democracy. Konrad Wandowicz opines that "Hall defines the nation as a spiritual, moral, and cultural unity of generations, shaped by a common history, tradition, motherland, and language" and compares this definition to similar statements by Burke.¹⁰ Bogdan Szlachta directly describes the foundation of the RMP as an act of an organized recreation of the Polish conservative movement. He writes: "According to the authors of the 'Declaration,' a conservative-minded individual can evolve only if, contrary to the liberal vision, he is firmly rooted in natural structures such as family, nation, and country. He must form his identity within the framework set by these traditional structures."¹¹

Conservatives, or to speak more broadly, the entire Right of that period, attempted to ground their political judgement on concepts such as the "state," the "*raison d'état*" reclaimed from the official newspeak, and "national interest." Their intent was to differentiate between general goals such as independence and particular goals such as a territorial self-government (as opposed to neighborhood or workers' councils). They worked towards an education no longer restrained by the shackles of ideology and falsehood and towards an ever-broadening area of free entrepreneurship. Bartyzel claimed that in order for the opposition to be capable of such thought, it must rid itself of the illusion of a "stateless society" or even of a society that constitutes itself against the state. He argued for the abandonment of "Poland's myth of mass social movements and the disavowal of politics as an immoral, shameful, and archaic construct."¹²

The circle of the *Polityka Polska* journal formulated a program in the mid-1980s that went far beyond the context of struggling against the system. This social circle brought to the stage its own conservative vision of statehood, inspired by the concept of mixed government with a strong head of state brought forward by a general election and the Senate as an emanation of the intellectual and moral elite. Kazimierz M. Ujazdowski, a younger member of this circle and later a deputy and minister of culture,

¹⁰ K. Wandowicz, *Współczesny konserwizm polityczny w Polsce (1989-1998)* (Wrocław: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Wrocławskiego, 2000), 128.

¹¹ B. Szlachta, *Konserwizm. Z dziejów tradycji myślenia o polityce* (Cracow, Warsaw: Dante-Ararat, 1998), 232.

¹² J. Bartyzel, "Uwagi o aktualnym stanie kultury politycznej w Polsce," *Polityka Polska* 8 (1986), 74-79.

said during the twentieth anniversary of the RMP that a fundamental achievement of the Movement was the “reconstitution of the continuity of Polish political thought and presentation in the late seventies, of an ideological alternative which went beyond ‘democratic socialism.’”¹³

Right-wing liberalism is the third noteworthy trend of the conservatism of the eighties. We should include its representatives in this account for several reasons. First of all, their views fit into what we consider the Anglo-Saxon type of conservatism. Second, in the political sense, the right-wing branch of liberalism was a natural ally of *Res Publica* and the RMP. These three trends will appear side by side at the end of the 1980s in the Dziekania Club of Political Thought (*Klub Myśli Politycznej “Dziekania”*), where many right-wing liberals had their share in creating the conservative groups of the 1990s. Finally, this trend must be noted in the history of conservatism in recent decades due to its very clear declarations in matters of nation, state, and religion.¹⁴

The specific individualism of Cracovian philosopher Mirosław Dzielski, the creator of the Christian liberal circle, seemed unique to the Polish scene. This individualism drove Dzielski to an ostentatious defense of the free enterprise program, even if the price to be paid would be persistent restrictions to political freedom for an undefined period of time. Immediately after the Martial Law, Dzielski founded a publication called *13 Grudnia* (December 13th, i.e. when the Martial Law was introduced), to spread the gospel of the free-market reconstitution of the country and afterwards strove for the official registration of the pro-market Cracow Industrial Society (*Krakowskie Towarzystwo Przemysłowe*). Dzielski sought potential allies for his stance on market reform, both in the government and the opposition, contributing to the founding of the “Dziekania” club. He was also a member of the Primate's Social Council.

In Warsaw, Janusz Korwin-Mikke created a vibrant publishing house called the *Officyna Liberalów*. The core concept of his circle was an ensemble of ideas close to the libertarian way of thought, though Korwin-Mikke himself often exhibited a cool, conservative reasoning and realism in his assessment of the situation. He built the framework for the co-

¹³ K. M. Ujazdowski, “Dziedzictwo RMP,” *Kwartalnik Konserwatywny* 6 (2000), 103.

¹⁴ The classification of these circles as conservative or rightist is also supported by Ryszard Rett Ludwikowski and Bogdan Szlachta. See R. Rett Ludwikowski, *Continuity and change in Poland: conservatism in Polish political thought* (Washington DC: The Catholic University of America Press, 1991), 285; Szlachta, *Konserwatyzm*, 231. This point of view was, in those days, equally popular in the conservative camp. See Bartyzel, *Prawica w Polsce...*, 53.

operation of a wider conservative-liberal group by creating *Stańczyk*, a publication edited “in federation,” and founded in 1987 that would become the Real Politics Union (*Unia Polityki Realnej*, UPR). In the end years of the PRL as well as in the Third Republic, this group was known for its non-conformism and harsh critique of the ruling elites. The post-1989 order did not escape accusations of possessing a socialist character. Unlike Dzielski's group, the UPR preserved its organizational independence throughout most of that period.

In the 1980s, the renaissance of conservatism—or, more generally, of the right-wing tradition of political thinking—was expressed through fervent activities in the realm of publishing (in both the official and unofficial circulation), and in the proliferation of informal, but officially tolerated discussion forums, as well as other non-governmental institutions.

It is no wonder, then, that the conservatism of the 1980s and later years was a trend that was most lively among academics and urban intelligentsia. It played a significant part in the political debate and produced individuals ready to adopt governmental positions, but was decidedly less effective in its organizational work and in broadening its influence on society. It remained, for the most part, the domain of an elite.

Culture or Politics?

Before closing this chapter of conservative thought, it is worth recalling the internal conflict within the RMP, a conflict that was significant not only in the light of the later disintegration of this circle, but also for the entire strategy of conservatism in the two decades that followed.¹⁵ Theatrologist and historian of political thought, Jacek Bartyzel, who was one of the creators of the ideological formula of the RMP, postulated that the conservative movement should be treated as “a fertile ground for sowing, the fruit of which would be reaped by others.” He advised the movement to refrain from making immediate political calculations and compromises aimed at gaining ground in the democratic play of interests. By defining the ideology of the movement as “a conservatism of eternal values” he wanted to create a political equivalent of a monastic order, which

¹⁵ Cf. P. Zaremba *Młodopolacy. Historia Ruchu Młodej Polski* (Gdańsk: Arche, 2000), 408–409; B. Szlachta, *Konserwatyzm*, 232; A. Dudek, “Konserwatyzm” in B. Bankowicz, A. Dudek, J. Majchrowski, *Główne nurty współczesnej myśli politycznej* (Cracow: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Jagiellońskiego, 1996), 53.

would stand guard over the trampled tablets of true values.¹⁶ Aleksander Hall, on the other hand, made every attempt to turn the movement into a veritable political party that would encompass other circles. Hall wanted to build a capacious formula, which would attract even those groups who “might find the ideological bases of the RMP too narrow.”¹⁷

Right-wing identity as defined by Jacek Bartyzel was based on two elements: (1) the will to remain faithful to the Catholic faith and (2) anti-egalitarianism. The second element relied on “the acknowledgement of the moral and intellectual inequality of humans” and a “bold questioning of the egalitarian myth that permeates the political sphere.” Bartyzel adds: “This social anti-egalitarianism should be grounded in the understanding of the natural hierarchies shaped by history, and of the need for the existence of the elites (respectively, an aristocracy).” Such a vision of right-wing ideology fed the conviction that “the democratization of culture is a decadent behaviour.”¹⁸

For his part, Hall questioned both elements. He declared the first criterion-compliance with the Catholic religion to be suitable for a religious movement, but it was unable to serve as a principle determining the identity of an ideological and political movement. He wrote: “A political movement cannot be privy to its members' opinions on God and religious dogma.” It can, however, declare certain beliefs to be fundamental to its identity: the belief in the unchanging nature of humanity, the necessity and value of communities which allow us to take root in a particular culture, the necessity to retain a historical continuity. Hall invoked Scruton's descriptions of the New Right, a movement that considers that “power is an evil only when it is abused.” This demonstrates that Hall's rightism was a means to curtail the new demands of the left, rather than an attempt to reverse certain historical processes, which many conservatives favoring Hall considered unavoidable and irreversible.

These polemicists were even further apart in their opinions concerning egalitarianism and democracy. Unlike Bartyzel, Hall did not consider democracy to be an agent and expression of decadence, but rather the good fruit of a historical evolution of Western civilization which best answered the questions of human dignity. He wrote: “Attempts to replace democracy with the rule of “aristoi” are misguided. In the era of mass communities, democratic procedure is the only attempt to raise a better

¹⁶ J. Bartyzel, “Prolegomena do tez ideowych,” *Polityka Polska*, 12 (1989): 39.

¹⁷ A. Hall, “Jackowi Bartyzelowi w odpowiedzi,” *Polityka Polska*, 12 (1989): 47.

¹⁸ Bartyzel, “Prolegomena do tez ideowych,” 33–34.

government which has had lasting success.” It seems, however, that in his polemic, Hall was too quick to move Bartyzel's postulate to the level of discussion of immediate governmental issues, failing to notice the cultural or meta-political dimension of his theses.

In this broad measure, Bartyzel is above all a critic of modernity, in which Hall (although not without reservations) feels at home. Bartyzel criticizes the foundation of what his opponent considers unquestionable reality. Hall himself reflected that Bartyzel's writings are “an expression of disgruntlement with modern times,” which saw the “decline of ideals,” the “materialization of society.” He called them “an expression of longing for a traditional society, where every element had its proper place,”¹⁹ a view which he did not share. This tension between traditionalism and modernity is a constant attribute of modern-day conservatism. It often leads to an actual ideological schism, which results in the questioning, by both sides, of their opponents' conservative character.

To uncover the core of Bartyzel's thinking, we must refer back to his remedy for the democratic decadence of civilization. The conservative answer, according to Bartyzel, would be “the reconstruction of the knightly ethos as the most worthy ideal of formative education.” To achieve this, a group must become “almost a political convent, which would stand guard over the trampled tablets of values.” This conservative strategy is easier to understand when we consider Bartyzel's thesis that “the will of the nation should be expressed as the will of the ‘noblest’ (in the etymological sense) and not the arithmetical majority. It is the aristoi, not the general populace, who express the will of the entire community, which is, after all, a community of generations, and not of individuals who simply exist in a given moment in time.”²⁰

Naturally, the “choice” between politics and culture was an individual decision, and did not restrict itself to the RMP circle. “Cultural” conservatives who spent the 90s practising the “splendid isolation” attitude towards their politically active acquaintances would often change their minds later on and step forward in the political world (prime examples are Ryszard Legutko and the circle surrounding Wiesław Walendziak). Some “political” conservatives limited their influence to meta-politics, debunking widely accepted stereotypes, scandalizing the “leftist-liberal” media, and provoking discussion concerning the boundaries of political correctness. Nevertheless, the cleavage drawn in the clash between Bartyzel and Hall,

¹⁹ Hall, “Jackowi Bartyzelowi w odpowiedzi,” 41–44.

²⁰ Bartyzel, “Prolegomena do tez ideowych,” 35–39.

later so often sustained by conservatives, is the key to understanding this account of the history and opinions of the conservative milieus of the Third Republic.

Political Conservatism

Political conservatism in general can be viewed from two angles. We can either follow the political evolution of those circles that are clearly and consciously conservative, which are aware of their ideological roots and describe their identity using language belonging to one of the conservative traditions, or we can also take the point of view favored by many political scientists, who tend to assimilate conservatism to Right-wing politics as such.²¹ While both are legitimate, the latter is more useful when it comes to constructing typologies in a comparative perspective. In a study of political thought, on the other hand, the former is more appropriate.

It is not by chance that the Centre Alliance (*Porozumienie Centrum*, PC) avoided the adjective “conservative,” while at the same time listing an identification with several other traditions (Christian democrats, people's parties, etc). To associate all right-wing expression and all political actions linked with religion or defense of national identity with conservatism is a pointless exercise. We can safely assume that conservatism in politics is characterized by, at the least, a referral to one of the many conservative schools of thought and action, whether Polish or otherwise.

All the more so when we recall that the Right the 1990s was deeply mistrustful of elaborate ideological concepts and treated them as overly intellectual and theoretical. One particular representative of this behavior was Lech Wałęsa, the leader of the Right in the 1990 presidential election. In other words, the Right was defined as an attitude of rather unsophisticated dislike towards post-communists and proponents of liberal transformation.

The history of conservatives in politics should be put in the context of the evolution of right-wing politics, which consists of three significant stages. During the first, over a dozen central-right parties exist within a short parliamentary episode (1991–1993) followed by the years 1993–1997 in which most of them are outside parliament. This is also the period of Lech Wałęsa's prominence, whose presidential campaign defined the

²¹ A. Antoszewski, “Siła partii konserwatywnych w Europie Środkowo-Wschodniej” in *Konserwatyzm. Historia i współczesność*, ed. Stefan Stępień, (Lublin: Wydawnictwo UMCS, 2003), 203–205.

understanding of rightism for many years ahead. In the second stage, almost all the parties came together as the Solidarity Electoral Action (*Akcja Wyborcza Solidarność*, AWS) and achieved positions in the government. For conservatives, this is a time of political emancipation and relative increase of influence. The third stage is that of the Law and Justice (*Prawo i Sprawiedliwość*, PiS) hegemony, beginning in 2001 with the electoral failure of AWS, with a significant conservative group abandoning it in favor of the Jarosław and Lech Kaczyński.

Even before the political scene started to take shape, conservatives had to stand the challenge of finding their place in the negotiations between the opposition and the government; later, they faced a similar difficulty in the first active months of the Contract Sejm. The outcome was exceptionally bad. They did not hold together in the Round Table talks. Although the plenary sessions saw Aleksander Hall, Marcin Król, and Stanisław Stomma (nestor of Catholic politics in the PRL) participating in a group of 26 representatives, conservatives were missing from the crucial political debates. Worse, at the Round Table, conservatism was not represented as a separate political standpoint.

The June 1989 elections brought another failure. Aleksander Hall and Tadeusz Mazowiecki sought to transform Solidarity's Citizens' Committee (*Komitet Obywatelski*, KO) into a broader coalition encompassing all opposition groups that accepted the rules of election for the Contract Sejm. This attempt lost out to Wałęsa's centralist vision, and Mazowiecki and Hall subsequently refused to campaign in the election. This weakened the conservatives' bargaining power. The majority of the conservatives did not take part in the elections. Neither the *Res Publica* nor the Christian liberals gathered around Mirosław Dzielski were represented. Coincidentally, Dzielski died in October 1989 in Bethesda, Maryland.

The Right-wing Mosaic of 1990–1996

The year 1990 was the setting for a crucial conflict regarding the orientation of the political scene. The conservatives were not, at that time, an organized political formation, and would even take different sides in the ranks of the old opposition. Aleksander Hall believed it would be important to create an alliance that would reject socialism as an artificial economical order and work to stabilize political power. For this reason, Hall was an active member in the political camp of Prime Minister Tadeusz Mazowiecki, acting as minister in his government and supporting his

presidential candidacy, and he was the co-creator of the Democratic Union (*Unia Demokratyczna*, UD). The consequences of this strategy were a stall in the construction of a central-right party and an election conflict with most other right-wing circles behind Lech Wałęsa.

The alternative strategy of political alliance among the conservatives was to aim at changing the moral and cultural framework of public life, to work on building parties and coalitions capable of defending the position of the Church in society, as well as protecting the national identity. In practice, this was, for many politically active conservatives, a choice between co-creating the Christian National Union (*Zjednoczenie Chrześcijańsko Narodowe*, ZChN) (Marek Jurek) or actively supporting Lech Wałęsa's presidential candidacy (Arkadiusz Rybicki). "The crucial choice set before us" explained Marek Jurek "lies between a christian civilization, and a post-christian, secular-liberal civilization."²²

One important issue was the influence of Wałęsa's presidential campaign, which shaped the right of the Third Republic. This right was religious, pro-union, patriotic, yet its mainstream had no concept of continuity in political traditions and references to political thought. This was a right which declined abstract debates on regime, which valued socio-cultural precision; a right that was rhetorically anti-communist, and yet incapable of settling their accounts with the previous government. In hindsight, we should find it significant that the leaders of today's rival Civic Platform (*Platforma Obywatelska*, PO) and PiS parties—respectively Donald Tusk and Jarosław Kaczyński—were both supporters of Wałęsa. Kaczyński quickly separated himself from Wałęsa's politics, while Tusk never entered into an open conflict with him. However, he was also quick to leave the right-wing bloc, mostly for reasons of moral and cultural sensibility.

This had to do with the second issue which shaped the right-wing camp: the debate over the protection of the "conceived life." Here, the conservatives were mostly united. Those of the UD, like Hall and Ujazdowski, as well as most others, supported a compromise that outlawed abortion, preserving exceptions in the case of danger to the mother's life or health, a prenatal diagnosis showing extreme and irreversible damage to the foetus, or conception being the result of an illegal act.²³ Due to those exceptions, proponents of an absolute ban voted against the bill or refrained from voting. Strong amongst them were the ZChN conservatives, former members

²² M. Jurek, "Na czym zbudujemy Rzeczpospolitą?," *Sprawa Polska* 1 (1990): 3.

²³ The decisive vote in the Sejm took place on January 7, 1993.

of the RMP (their leader, Marek Jurek, abstained). This position would gain in significance fourteen years later, when the PiS party would split and lose a part of its conservative wing just before the 2007 election.

The third issue which shaped the right was the argument over the process of lustration, or more precisely, concerning the public release of classified information concerning the alleged collaboration of politicians from Jan Olszewski's crumbling government (June 4th, 1992) with the Communist Secret Service. The list, which contained the names of president Lech Wałęsa and speaker of the Sejm Wiesław Chrzanowski, was a national sensation and led to further divides and even more mistrust and mutual accusations.

We should remember that these events took place during a time when the Sejm was politically fragmented, seating the representatives of over 20 political movements. The 1993 elections that followed the fall of yet another center-right government proved to be a spectacular fiasco for practically the entire Right. The electorate was not to blame; they supported the center-right in great numbers, casting over 35% votes for those groups. The failure was due to a political scattering. The new system set a 5% threshold for parties, and 8% for coalitions, which left the center-right absent from the Sejm.

The 1993 failure did not speed up integration. In the center, the UD and the Liberal Democratic Congress (*Kongres Liberalno-Demokratyczny*, KLD) joined forces to become Freedom Union (*Unia Wolności*, UW). Meanwhile, on the Right, further divisions took place that affected conservatives as well. Kazimierz Ujazdowski led his group out of Aleksander Hall's party, forming the Conservative Coalition (*Koalicja Konserwatywna*)—they had refused to take part in attempts to rebuild the alliance with the UD. Ujazdowski justified the split with the imperative of “conservatism in the Right” in the face of mainstream compromise.

Ujazdowski had helped form the elective alliance of the ZChN conservatives in 1993 and later led his group across to AWS—and then finally PiS. He believed that “conservatism in modern Poland has two great tasks to fulfil. First, it must defend culture against what John Paul II called the civilization of death. Second, conservative politics must fight to rebuild a healthy political and economic system, it must strive for a strong country, an efficient administration, widespread property; in essence, those institutions which enable Poland to maintain its identity with the ultimate goal of competing with the rich nations of Europe.”²⁴

²⁴ “Zbudować <<partię partii>>,” interview with Kazimierz M. Ujazdowski by Radosław Rybiński, *Nowe Państwo*, May 9, 1997.

Another event of political importance to conservatism occurred just prior to the 1997 election. In January, Hall's conservatives joined with Artur Balazs' right-wing peasant party, and with yet another right-wing chip off the UW, Jan Rokita and the future president Bronisław Komorowski. Together, they formed the Conservative People's Party (*Stronnictwo Konserwatywno-Ludowe*, SKL). SKL was without a doubt the strongest formation to be created by conservatives. Ujazdowski joined it after the election.

The Right-wing Rule: Akcja Wyborcza Solidarność (1997–2001)

As the center-right continued to crumble and failed to find a common candidate other than Lech Wałęsa for the presidential election, the leaders of the Solidarity worker's union were forced to take decisive political action. Taking advantage of its hegemonic position over the weakened parties, the union decreed the rules for a new coalition which would encompass almost the entire Right. The project was made easier by Lech Wałęsa's loss of influence after his defeat in the presidential elections. Piotr Semka, a commentator for the right-wing newspaper *Życie* wrote: "A year without Wałęsa is the first year in a very long time in which the idea of integration dominates that of destruction on the right side of the political stage. This is no coincidence."²⁵

The 1997 victory of AWS changed a lot for the conservatives. Fourteen deputies from the SKL and two from the Koalicja Konserwatywna entered the Third Term Sejm. Conservatives were also represented by several deputies among the ZChN and non-party AWS members. Their position was strengthened by their participation in creating, within the AWS, a new conservative circle that had not previously played a strictly political part. The colloquial term coined for them was "pampers" (I will explain this moniker and the group's provenance below). Their leader was the former head of public television, a man closely tied to Hall and Jurek in the RMP period: Wiesław Walendziak.

AWS charged Walendziak's group with preparing their election campaign, trusting in their media and marketing skills. The "pampers" themselves were so confident in their abilities after their success in the election that they began thinking of themselves in terms of "the Polish Fidesz," and of Walendziak as "the new Berlusconi." Walendziak was considered for the most important government seats and was eventually chosen to be chief of

²⁵ P. Semka, "Rok bez Wałęsy," *Życie*, January 3, 1997.

the chancellery of the prime minister. He was not followed into the SKL by his circle, which was busy with creating large-scale media projects: a Catholic radio network called Radio Plus, and Telewizja Familijna, a television station benefiting from the broadcast license owned by the Franciscan Order.

Nevertheless, in the first government under Jerzy Buzek, the only conservatives holding significant positions were Walendziak and Jarosław Sellin, the government spokesperson. However, conservatives had a great influence in the promotion of one of this government's main reforms: the change of the administrative division of the country (from 49 to 16 voivodships) and the introduction of regional government. But the Right was divided not only in terms of ideology, other fissures proved more significant in their affect on existing groups. They concerned the approach to the UW, the lustration and settling of accounts with the past, the harshness of penal politics, and the protection of the national interest in questions of economy. The moderate wing of the AWS included SKL politicians such as Aleksander Hall, Jan Rokita, and Bronisław Komorowski, but also mainstream AWS members such as Maciej Płażyński. After the lost election of 2000, most of them decided to ally with Donald Tusk and Andrzej Olechowski in forming the PO.

AWS also had two rather more radical right wings: one was social, anti-liberal and ostentatiously Catholic, linked to Radio Maryja; the other was conservative and explicitly anti-communist. The latter included SKL members Kazimierz Ujazdowski, Wiesław Walendziak, and Mirosław Styczeń, as well as ZChN members Kazimierz Marcinkiewicz and Marek Jurek. The circle of Jarosław Kaczyński and Ludwik Dorn, which was evolving towards conservatism, was also part of that wing. This second wave founded two new parties in 2001: PiS (lead by the brothers Lech and Jarosław Kaczyński) and the conservative Right Alliance (*Przymierze Prawicy*, PP), which was created by politicians from the SKL and ZChN. The latter's statement of principles began with the words: "Poland needs ambitious politics, which will preserve its national and Christian identity, and allow us to become a country capable of competing with the rich nations of Europe." The five main political issues of the right were: the creation of a "strong and pure state," the promotion of family rights, a competitive and strong Polish economy, the realization of Polish interests in the process of integration with the European Union, high standards for public servants and translucent public life.²⁶

²⁶ Przymierze Prawicy, "Pięć najważniejszych spraw," *Polska Scena Polityczna* 6 (2001): 21.

The declaration was signed by Kazimierz M. Ujazdowski (as chairman), Mariusz Kamiński, Kazimierz Marcinkiewicz, Stefan Niesiołowski, Marian Piłka, Mirosław Styczeń and Wiesław Walendziak. The club formed by PiS and PP counted 18 deputies.

Notably, the end of the nineties saw the shifting of certain circles towards the ideology of the conservative right. This was definitely the case for the leaders of the Porozumienie Centrum with Jarosław Kaczyński and Ludwik Dorn, as well as Jan Rokita's group. It will soon become apparent that the new generation of *Res Publica* editors is making a similar move towards cultural conservative circles, along with Jarosław Gowin (minister of justice from 2011 to 2013) and Bronisław Wildstein (chairman of public television from 2006 to 2007).

The Hegemony of Prawo and Sprawiedliwość (after 2001)

The decision to form the PP and enter the elections together with PiS was the beginning of a new chapter in the history of political conservatism. Although a strong conservative wing remained in the PO, its later rivalry with PiS, as well as the exclusion of many conservative politicians from the party (for various reasons), left the key role of political representation of conservatism to PiS.

Before this occurred however, PO attempted to maintain its image as a party with clear conservative tendencies. In December 2001, its ideological declaration stated: "The Decalogue is the foundation of Western civilization. We commonly believe in the permanent value of the norms it proclaims. We do not want the State to stand guard over the Decalogue, but the State cannot allow some, in violation of the principles it addresses, to deprive others of dignity and rights, or to corrupt those who are not yet mature enough to take full responsibility for their own life. For this reason, the State must be shrewd in its support of the family and traditional social norms which serve its permanence and development."²⁷ Notably, in autumn 2002, PO joined PiS in creating a single electoral group for local elections in most voivodships.

Over time, however, PO moved closer to the center. After the departure of Maciej Płażyński, the party had at most only a conservative wing, which was led by first by Jan Rokita and Zyta Gilowska, and after their

²⁷ The ideological declaration of the PO as accepted by the PO Parliamentary Club on December 21, 2000.

departure, by Jarosław Gowin. Today, the identity axis among PO conservatives are mainly issues of cultural and social norms (abortion, in vitro, same-sex unions) and the protection of Poland's position in the European Union. Conservatives had a much greater influence in PiS, mainly because giving the party a conservative character was in line with the intentions of its leaders: Jarosław and Lech Kaczyński. Also, until 2003, conservatives had maintained organizational independence (as PP) and could now negotiate the program terms of admission into PiS. Finally, the individual positions of politicians such as Marek Jurek or Kazimierz Ujazdowski remained unchallenged until 2007.

Seventeen deputies from the PP were included in the PiS club. Kaczyński did not hesitate to deal out significant public roles: in 2004, Ujazdowski became vice-speaker of the Sejm; in 2005, soon after PiS won the parliamentary election, Jurek became speaker of the Lower House, and Kazimierz Marcinkiewicz was given the post of prime minister. During the PiS rule, Ujazdowski became minister of culture, Jerzy Polaczek became minister of transport, and the conservative intellectual (who had no ties to the PP and had not been politically active prior to 2005) Ryszard Legutko became minister of education.

The apogee of conservative ideological influence on the Polish political scene falls in the years 2003-2005. It was then that the Sejm formed a committee of inquiry to investigate the "Rywin affair," which caused a wide affirmation of the validity of the conservative diagnosis of the national and institutional crisis.

To evaluate the PiS government is to wade deep in controversy as its opponents and supporters are both radical. On the one hand, that government successfully dealt with many issues left untouched by previous ruling parties. On the other hand, the PiS years were a time of conflicts, which, regardless of their actual significance, were emotionally charged, full of drastic accusations, and antagonized group after group of opponents who had at first appeared to be potential allies. The first issue which conservatives found to be significant was the failure of a coalition with PO. This coalition would have strengthened the conservative position in both parties; the fiasco definitely weakened it. But the conservatives still had to face the phantom of their tactical alliance with the anti-European and traditionalist League of Polish Families (*Liga Polskich Rodzin*, LPR) and agrarian-populist Samoobrona, an alliance which had the character of a coalition government. LPR may have been an "acceptable" party, but Samoobrona and its leader had in previous years been so often vilified by PiS politicians (conservatives in particular) that the

coalition was almost unimaginable. An alliance with these two parties changed the character of the government. Though it began with a program of in-depth reforms that required an agreement with PO, it eventually turned towards actions aimed at the establishment of a strict policy of anti-corruption as well as the dissolution of the military's secret service.

Conservative politicians remaining in the fold of the PiS party weighed the above-mentioned flaws against their ability to act and found it a satisfactory compensation. Kazimierz Ujazdowski was the most active in that respect. During his term as minister of culture, he founded a program called *Patriotyzm Jutra* (The Patriotism of Tomorrow) and created the Museum of Polish History project with Tomasz Merta and Robert Kostro. However, it was hard not to notice that these acts were of marginal concern to the government.

By 2007, PiS had already become a party with a clear anti-establishment character and was constantly criticized by the media although it had no capacity to form a coalition. It took over the radical electorate of the LPR and Samoobrona and held a strong position in rural areas while losing influence in large cities. A large part of its electorate drifted away, preferring a more moderate line of thought as proposed, among others, by conservatives.

Political conservatism was a choice that proved difficult to realize. It could not act independently, though it frequently reaffirmed its identity and autonomy. It supported many endeavors by cultural conservatives, whose strong position was, at least in part, the result of the political presence of people such as Wiesław Walendziak, Kazimierz Ujazdowski, Marek Jurek and Jarosław Sellin. It was no coincidence that these men played important parts in public television, the board of national radio and television, and the ministry of culture.

Cultural Conservatism

The conviction that the main goal of conservatism is not merely a struggle for power and political influence, but the formation of more permanent (particularly cultural) core concepts regarding social life already existed—as demonstrated through the debates of Bartyzel and Hall—even before the fall of communism. However, the boundary between “political” and “cultural” conservatives was not as clear as the declaration made it appear.

It is worth noting that Polish cultural conservatism evolved not only as a reaction to the secularization and commercialization of culture and the subsequent loosening of moral standards; it also grew in response to its conflict with political conservatism. In 1992, one of its heralds, editor of *Arka* Ryszard Legutko claimed that

the so-called Polish right-wing (what a foggy concept, I have no idea whom to pin the label on and why) is incredibly reactive. It limits itself mainly to matters of party politics, the fight for power, influence...Meanwhile, the issue is fundamental in nature. If I could offer my advice to the most concerned gentlemen, I would say that change (if there can be change, a highly unpredictable occurrence) can be achieved by striking elsewhere. Instead of targeting *Gazeta Wyborcza*, concrete individuals or parties (e. g. the Unia Demokratyczna) they should create a culture, a certain mindset; to use another term, they should write scholarly works. That's how I see it: it is done with books, with universities, and not with fussing about in party meetings.²⁸

Legutko postulated the construction of a meta-political Right, separated from current politics not only by way of its terms, but by a barrier of an extremely critical opinion toward politics itself. This proposition was analogous to the one described by Bartyzel four years earlier. Legutko's writings did not include the motive of defending the old order—so typical for Bartyzel—and his stand was not traditionalist, though the scale of his disapproval of modernity was just as high.

Wiesław Walendziak in turn made the same efforts to provoke a discussion of political conservatism like many other conservative subversives. He asked whether the change in Polish opinion on abortion is caused by “right-wing political activity, or by the work of various social movements, whom I would call the spokesmen for a pure, solid truth?”²⁹

Around that time, Andrzej Nowak wrote an interesting piece entitled *The Need for a Reconquista* which almost appears to be a manual for right-wing leaders aspiring to power. “There is a battle to be fought in the area of culture, of ideal. Today, power is less army and police *hardware*, and more a command of words, meanings, images.” He suggested that “a re-conquest of the socio-cultural sphere is necessary, since that is where the permanence of the changes on the political sphere is decided.” The proposed area for this reconquest was schools, universities, publishing houses, and most of all, the media.³⁰ They were the main concern of cultural conservatives and the sites of their first significant victories.

²⁸ R. Legutko, “Głos w dyskusji: Czy można nie być nowoczesnym?,” *Arka* 43 (1992): 15.

²⁹ “Jesteśmy integralni. Rozmowa z Wiesławem Walendziakiem,” *Frona* 9 (1997): 336.

³⁰ A. Nowak, “Potrzebna rekonkwista,” *Życie*, February 21, 1997.

In 1993, Parliament created an opportunity for the transformation of the Committee for Radio and Television into individual companies, with Telewizja Polska (TVP) S.A. leading the fray. Television was released from the government's direct control. The first chairman of TVP S.A. was chosen by the National Board of Radio and Television (*Krajowa Rada Radiofonii i Telewizji*, KRRiT), established by the Sejm, Senate, and President. The post was given to Wiesław Walendziak (who had been a director of the private broadcasting company Telewizja Polsat). Marek Jurek led the KRRiT for six months, and he and Jarosław Sellin were members for six years. After PiS won the elections, Bronisław Wildstein held the post, while Paweł Lisicki was placed at the head of one of the most important daily newspapers, the *Rzeczpospolita*. Though all of this does not alter the fact that today conservatives are a clear minority in the media, they are a very well-defined minority with a strong voice in the public debate.

The 1990s brought four significant centers of cultural conservatism, which spent that decade convinced that their idea of conservatism was better and more sophisticated than that of the political elite. These centers were:

- the Cracow circle of “Arcana”
- the “pampers” circle
- the “Frona” circle
- the heirs of the *Res Publica Nowa*

Arka and its continuation, *Arcana*, was led by two professors: philosopher Ryszard Legutko, quoted above, and historian Andrzej Nowak (head of *Arcana* to this day). They claimed to take great steps to break out of the crisis “first brought onto Poland by communism, and later the false formula of its transformation realized between 1988 and 1993.” They wrote: “in order to build a conservative political formation capable of performing the tasks which modernity challenges Poles with, we must start by the reconstitution of its intellectual foundation.”³¹

One of the most important works describing this foundation was a lecture given at the *Arcana* conference in September 1996 by Andrzej Nowak. It was entitled *Nasze Zasady, Nasz Naród* (Our rules, our nation). Its opening sentence could be said to be the credo or leitmotiv of the magazine: “The only standard of a modern politician seems to be the lack

³¹ *Arcana* 1 (1995): 3.

of any standards at all.” The exemplary “modern politician” was, in the speaker’s eyes, the newly-elected President Aleksander Kwaśniewski, and the politics in question were a particular contract between the government and the governed.

The foundation, the fusing agent, the very deity of this arrangement is the hope for constant economic development, for the increasing possibility of material consumption for all participants. [...] The impatient leaders criticise society, which has not yet fully submitted their needs and temptations to that arrangement. Meanwhile, the people grow restless, and accuse the leaders of impotence as the promised way of life, a Hollywood lifestyle advised by the media, is not yet accessible. Yet the general direction is never questioned, and the strongest parties compete within its framework. They privatise the country, and invite all of their customers to reap the benefits.³²

The *Arcana* approach to politics remains noteworthy even when its rhetorical temperament deprives the “dilletanti” of dignity and approval. The political school of *Arcana* bases many of its analyses on the premise of the existence of an organically good civic energy, stifled by the demands of the political class, which impedes social activity as it fears losing its own usurping position.

By contrast to *Arcana*, the previously mentioned *pampers* circle formulated their own criticism of right-wing politics. This circle was formed between 1994 and 1996 by a group attempting to reform the public television inherited from the previous system. Their moniker was coined by their opponents when Walendziak took the post of chairman of public television and his choice of associates were individuals in their thirties and younger. As the public television employees engaged by the previous system belonged to older generations, they dubbed their new superiors with this intentionally pejorative nickname. But instead of being offended, the *pampers* assumed the name and used it in casual conversation and even public speeches.

A large number of the new television executives were of a conservative persuasion. Akin to Walendziak, Waldemar Gasper was an immensely influential and significant character. As a co-creator of the broadcasting strategy, Gasper stressed that the most important achievement of ‘94-‘96 was the creation of an opportunity for the exposure of those circles which shaped modern culture, as well as the acknowledgement of themes in national tradition which had until then gone unmentioned (series such as “Kultura Duchowa Narodu,” “Mapa Kultury

³² A. Nowak, “Nasze zasady, nasz naród,” *Arcana* 5 (1996): 5-6.

Polskiej,” various historical series, etc).³³ “It is a time for politics” was the first sentence of Gasper’s editorial in the third edition of *Debata*. “And so, for many representatives of our circle, it is a time to become politically active.” He stressed the priority of the “pre-political space” and “the establishment of institutions of culture and media” to explain that activity in those areas must, in the existing, imbalanced conditions, be protected by politics.³⁴ Cezary Michalski explained the necessity of the decision to “enter politics” by speaking of a practical lack of any other choice. “If political institutions remain in the hands of the Democratic Left Alliance (*Sojusz Lewicy Demokratycznej*, SLD), we will certainly see the expulsion of all persons unattached to the post-PRL powers from every significant area of public and cultural life.”³⁵

The part played by the *pampers* community has been outlined in the previous chapter. The moment of Walendziak’s involvement in the first stage of evolution of PiS was an important point in *pampers* history. Walendziak entered the Sejm as a candidate of the party and retired his mandate some years later in order to start a career in business.

We could not truthfully place the *Res Publica* circle (*Res Publica Nowa* after 1993) in the mosaic of conservative contestations of the nineties if the magazine had not been the first to publish pieces by a group evolving towards conservatism. This circle had ties to the lesser-known Warsaw Club of Political Critique. At the dawn of the twenty-first century, the group should prove to be quite independent—it is impossible to dismiss its roots, its inspirations, and its first steps on the political scene.

Certainly neither their initial association with, nor the later departure from Marcin Król’s journal was a coincidence. Tomasz Merta spoke plainly, claiming that the *Res Publica* of the late eighties was a school of political realism, and that this myth was shattered in the next decade. *Res Publica* proved to be a disappointment: “you thought you were political realists, and I thought I was reading pieces written by political realists, but it turns out that we were dealing with another incarnation of idealism all along. *Res Publica*’s reaction was that of disappointed idealists, who discovered that reality fell short of their ideals.” Merta also noticed that the *Res Publica* was beginning to mimic the mainstream.³⁶ Evidently conser-

³³ W. Gasper, “Kultura – fundament polityki polskiej,” *Debata* 3 (1998): 15.

³⁴ W. Gasper, “Kultura – fundament polityki polskiej,” 2.

³⁵ “Pampersi na Dzikich Polach,” Interview with Cezary Michalski by Radosław Rybiński and Paweł Siennicki, *Nowe Państwo*, June 26, 1998.

³⁶ “Dyskusja Redakcyjna. O co nam wtedy chodziło?,” *Res Publica Nowa* 5-6 (1999), 8-9.

vatism was not an element of the monthly's identity, but merely a subject, and even sometimes the target of attack. In a strange twist, the new conservative group would evolve in a circle where the dislike for conservatism was rapidly rising, and they would form their rationale in the midst of a conflict of ideals and generations. Incidentally, the most interesting articles published by the Warsaw Club of Political Critique were extremely critical of the "existing" conservatism. They maintained the style coined by Marcin Król in the eighties, which was to speak once as a conservative and once again as an indifferent bystander; to describe conservatism from an indefinite limbo between the first and third person singular.

The Warsaw Club of Political Critique was called into existence in the winter of 1995, following the election and Aleksander Kwaśniewski's victory. In conservative circles, this event provoked questions of a more general nature concerning the crux of democratic politics. The double victory of the post-communists pushed the young "republicans" a little further right. From then on, the path taken by this group was extremely significant to Polish conservatism. This is because the "late calling" criticizing of the system of the Third Republic would result in a series of completely new ideological conclusions. The majority of the Warsaw Club members would, after 2003, decidedly support a conservative vision of the world, swapping places with the very same people they had not long before accused of fundamentalism.

Marek Cichocki, Dariusz Gawin and Dariusz Karłowicz would create the magazine and publishing house *Political Theology* (Teologia Polityczna), which would clearly underline the ideological evolution of the group. Despite the apparently religious name, the group would describe its identity mainly in context of community republicanism. This would influence the understanding of government. Gawin states that "*res publica* is not a 'thing', but a 'cause,' ergo it does not describe a thing which exists beside the citizens (the government as a sum of institutions, laws, offices etc.) but it refers us to the relationship between citizens." He applies this reasoning to the reality of the August 1980 protests and the Warsaw Uprising of 1944. "The pathos of the August strikes was a result of the immense emotions overwhelming people as they participated in the expression of common will as well as common feelings. The community of will and emotion allowed the creation of a common 'cause'—the *res publica*, or in other words, 'Solidarity.'"³⁷

³⁷ D. Gawin, "Obecność sierpnia" in *Blask i gorycz wolności* (Cracow: OMP – WSE, 2006), 85.

Members of this circle were active in both political groups of the “third Right;” they advised Jan Rokita, but also Lech Kaczyński, who was then headed for the presidential chair. They contributed, together with Paweł Kowal, Jan Ołdakowski and Lena Cichocka, to the creation of the Warsaw Rising Museum. After the 2005 breakthrough and the changes in public television, it received its own program in the TVP Kultura station. Cichocki was also to become advisor to President Kaczyński and head negotiator for the Polish delegation during the EU summit, which would shape the Union's constitutional treaty. Gawin would become deputy director of the Warsaw Rising Museum, and Tomasz Merta the vice-minister of culture during both the PiS and PO governments. Their colleague from the Warsaw Club of Political Critique, Robert Krasowski, who had never been part of the *Res Publica*, would take a different path. He would keep his distance from right-wing politics and remain sceptical of its worldview. He would become the editor-in-chief of the ideological weekly *Europa*, and later of the *Dziennik* published in 2006-2009 by Axel Springer Poland.

If we look to the very edge of the conservative world, to the place where it meets the world of exclusively religious inspiration, we will find its youngest generation, *Fronda*. When asked to explain his motives, Grzegorz Górny (born in 1969) pointed to the religious, Christian roots of the conservative ideals. “In my case” he wrote in answer to the *Arcana* questionnaire, “conservatism is not a political choice, but rather a socio-cultural one. I believe T.S. Eliot was correct in his claim that politics are merely a function of culture, and the heart of culture is religion. That is the hierarchy of values that I respect. I do not identify myself with any political party, I do not follow the meanders of current politics. I concern myself with issues of a longer and deeper impact on people, and believe they are more important.”³⁸

The concept of *Fronda* was to publish a religious magazine within the aesthetics and poetics of postmodernism. Its creators explained it as follows: “We want our publication to be expressive of a generation, to be a kid's slingshot which we aim at our elders.”³⁹ Incidentally, Gawin criticized *Fronda* for its editing and illustration style. “It is a style of provocation, consciously dosed out, organized and fueled. One does not have to be an expert in the heated discussions of contemporary humanities to as-

³⁸ G. Górny, “Czy jestem konserwatystą?,” *Arcana* 7 (1996): 37.

³⁹ C. Gmyz, “O dwóch takich. Grzegorz Górny, Rafał Smoczyński,” *Życie*, December 15, 2000.

sociate this intellectual and aesthetic emploi with a postmodernist jumble of styles, the aestheticizing of thought, and a spirit of permissive allowance for all manner of odd behaviour and shenanigans.”⁴⁰

When observing new elements in the evolution of Polish conservatism in recent years, one may find it useful to remember the words of Karl Mannheim. He stated that the various styles of political thought do not necessarily have to crystallize around political action: the formative agent can also be religion, cultural or intellectual trends.⁴¹ The fact that publications declaring a strictly religious perspective on reality appeared in the conservative Right is one of the more significant factors in describing contemporary conservatism. The radical *Fronda* was soon joined by *Teologia Polityczna* and *Christianitas*. The latter was the work of Paweł Milcarek and the circle of Marek Jurek and does not appear to accept late modernity in any way. Yet its tone is optimistic, not so much in political calculation as in the awareness of religious vitality, which Milcarek even went so far as to call “the archipelago of radical orthodoxy” and which profited from the anti-modernist turn made in the Church by Benedict XVI.

It is worth adding that recent years saw significant differences in the political views of various conservative currents and the position taken by the Church hierarchy. The first such difference concerned membership of the European Union (although it was not a matter of rules but of political discernment), which was firmly supported by the authorities of the Polish Church. The second bone of contention was the death penalty, defended by most conservatives, yet criticized by the Church; the third, the war on terrorism (i.e. the war led by the USA in Iraq and Afghanistan). Opinions differed in matters of lustration, especially where the suspected collaboration of the clergy, especially bishops, with the PRL secret service was in question. It would seem that after the failure of PiS, circles such as *Teologia Polityczna*, *Arcana* and *Christianitas* would try to lay outward pressure on politics, and build a Polish equivalent of the American Christian Right, incapable of formulating a political offer, but extremely successful in defining the cultural and moral agenda.

The political career of Ryszard Legutko was also an important feature in the identity of conservatism of the last quarter of the century. Legutko was a leader of conservative “meta-politicians.” “It took me a great deal of time,” he states, “to come to the obvious realization that I am probably

⁴⁰ D. Gawin, “Pampersi w siódlach postmodernizmu,” *Res Publica Nowa* 4 (1997): 3-4.

⁴¹ K. Mannheim, *Myśl konserwatywna [Conservatism]* (Warsaw: Kolegium Otryckie, 1986), 16-17.

the only person who considers himself to be a 'clerk.' For better or for worse, the atmosphere in our country and the world in general is currently such [...] that this sort of statement is not taken seriously."⁴² Legutko campaigned for a position in the senate twice, each time with support from PiS. After his first success in 2005, he went as far as to become vice-marshal of the Senate. After the PiS-LPR-Samoobrona coalition disbanded, he was, for a few months, minister of education. After failing in the senate election of 2007, Legutko accepted the post of secretary of state in the President's office. In 2009, he entered the European Parliament.

Political activity appealed to yet another intellectual from Cracow, the long-term editor-in-chief of *Znak*, Jarosław Gowin. Much like Legutko, he made a successful start in the senate election of 2005, with the difference of being backed by the PO. Both parties had constructed their candidate lists in a manner that made it impossible for candidates of similar positions to compete. Thus, Gowin's position in the senate was won not through rivalry, but rather cooperation with Legutko. However, the parallel in their paths was not defined by a simple vote. The question lies in the conclusion that must have sparked the decision to swap meta-political reflection for strictly political practice.

Matters of State and Institutions

In the conservative political strategy, two disparate positions are apparent. The first concerns itself with the redefinition of institutions, the second with the construction of national community. The first is termed conservative institutionalism, the second, community republicanism. These terms contain a conviction that neither of these movements is simply "conservatism," mostly due to the fact that their offers extend beyond the boundaries of conservatism and may be accepted by individuals with no conservative persuasions. Other schools of thought opining on the state exist as well—continuations of ideas expressed by Aleksander Hall, Bronisław Łagowski, the UPR, the monarchists of the Conservatist-Monarchist Club (*Klub Zachowawczo-Monarchistyczny*, KZM) and the PiS Bonapartism.

The starting point for institutional thought is the persuasion that in the post-communist era, the main task of the Right is to rebuild the state, create a just system of laws and construct institutions capable of serving both

⁴² "Polityk ma coś do zrobienia," Interview with R. Legutko by A. Nowak, *Arcana* 68 (2006), 15.

citizens and the interest of the State. Cezary Michalski made a noteworthy comment on the matter as early as the nineties: "Strong values are not values expressed by maximal radicalism. They are values which leave behind institutions."⁴³ By these criteria, the PiS government scores very poorly, while the doctrinal passiveness of the successors of Marcinkiewicz and Kaczyński practically guarantees the maintenance of the "institutional makeshift" left behind by the Third Republic.

Significantly, conservatives were quick to adopt a position that varied from the majority. From the very first days of the Third Republic, they accentuated the necessity of strengthening the state, the executive power in particular. "The governmental mechanism is damaged in its most important area," wrote Robert Krasowski, "the area which makes the will of the governor a reality. We could say that political power is nonexistent, or at least that it does not reach the level necessary to ensure the uncompromised permanence of the governing body, while giving the subjects a minimum of satisfaction with their government. Though it may seem extravagant to talk of the death of state, it is the simple conclusion of commonly shared concepts. Since the beginning of the Third Republic, there has been a strong conviction which now proves universal: politicians are not, in fact, governing."⁴⁴

This diagnosis is supplemented by Jan Rokita's conviction of the negative attitude of the new political elites towards the issue of institutional reform. "Regardless of whether we listen to individuals with rightist or leftist opinions, it seems that institutional thinking in our country is incredibly weak," he said in 2004. "This has always been the case. Poland has no tradition of institutional thought. The exception is the heritage of the Cracow conservatives, the legacy of the "Stańczyk" circle. They insisted on truthfully proclaiming that the construction and permanence of institutions are key to the quality of Polish politics. Having been part of the Polish public scene for fifteen years, I am constantly met with proof of utter disregard for this aspect of politics."⁴⁵

The governmental and institutional weakness of the post-communist state was understood by conservatives to be a failure of the Third Republic project, which became most visible after the enactment of the new constitution in April 1997. A frail executive government, the lack of ade-

⁴³ C. Michalski, "Pan Cogito znów walczy ze smokiem," *Życie*, November 19, 1996.

⁴⁴ R. Krasowski, "Gdzie jest władza," *Europa*, June 28, 2004.

⁴⁵ "Nadszedł czas szarpnięcia cugli," interview with J. Rokita by C. Michalski, *Europa*, October 6, 2004.

quate reforms in jurisdiction, the high level of corruption, and the inadequate instruments of defense of Poland's interests in the international arena during the new phase of globalization were only some of the messages included in the 1997 conservative thesis which elaborated the necessity to work on establishing a Fourth Republic.⁴⁶

An establishment of the Fourth Republic should occur "not by way of destroying the current state, but by giving it a new governmental system, new laws and institutions. Equipped with these laws and institutions, the nation would regain the possibility of competing with other European nations in terms of economy, work qualifications, education and culture. (...) The Fourth Republic should not grow out of a rebellion against the Third, but be the result of a decision made to acknowledge the necessity of building a new state."⁴⁷ Some opinion journalists returned to this slogan six years later (Paweł Śpiwak, Zdzisław Krasnodębski), as did the PiS party. Its critics would use the term "Fourth Republic" to describe the party's ruling term.

Conservatives did not succeed in building a wider coalition for the institutional reconstruction. Placing the Fourth Republic project in the PiS party program proved to be a Pyrrhic victory, as the practical government of PiS had nothing in common with conservative postulates. Nevertheless, it caused a rise in the disapproval of any changes to the executive branch of the government. What is more, the institutional themes in conservatism were dominated by the postulates put forward by cultural traditionalists and supporters of building community through active historical politics.

Post-communism

The post-communist fallout was approached in various ways by Polish elites. Some noticed the remains of the old system in the habits of the populace and gladly used the term "homo sovieticus." They easily recognized both the representatives of that lifestyle and the line of thought among peasants from government-owned agricultural farms, the employees of large heavy industry companies, even among the unemployed. Others would warn against a personal continuation of the system in admini-

⁴⁶ In the political field, this position was made many years before the appearance of PiS by the Conservative Coalition acting within AWS.

⁴⁷ R. Matyja, "Między Trzecią a Czwartą Rzeczypospolitą," *Nowe Państwo*, April 11, 1997.

stration, economy, and the courts, noticing that the new teams included an excessive number of the old representatives of the communist party, collaborators of the secret service, judges and prosecutors humbly performing the political demands of the communists.

Meanwhile, the conservative stance with regard to post-communism was not unanimous and, in some cases, went through a significant evolution. In 1989, not only did many conservatives refuse to accept the Round Table agreements, but they also had no intention of questioning the political privileges of post-communists. As minister in Mazowiecki's office, Aleksander Hall was responsible for the relationship with political parties. He was opposed to the idea of depriving PZPR of its wealth and opined that attacking the post-communists would only lead to their consolidation and perhaps a counter-action against the new government. "The renaissance and strengthening of post-communist forces is not caused by a failure to banish them, but by the fact that socialism is ingrained much deeper in our society than we could have suspected."⁴⁸

At the same time, the birth of post-communism as a segment linking the actions of old system agents within the new state—and its politics, economy, administration and secret service—were dismissed by part of the conservative circle. Even in the mid-nineties some still believed that the market would be a sufficient regulator: they expected that the wealth of those who achieved it through crime and abuse would dwindle, and that hard-working, clever and enterprising citizens would triumph.

The Porozumienie Centrum, the weekly *Tygodnik Solidarność* (which saw Jarosław Kaczyński as its editor-in-chief for a year) and the *Nowy Świat* were highly critical of the situation. It was within that forum that Professor Jadwiga Staniszkis first formulated the thesis of the danger of post-communist technocrats reclaiming control of the financial sector, significant enterprises and part of the media.⁴⁹ In the years that followed, the diagnosis made by Staniszkis would often appear in the *Arka*, *Arcana*, *Debata*, and *Kwartalnik Konserwatywny*, and her works inspired union members of *Solidarity* as well as conservatives from among the "pam-pers" and the Conservative Coalition. Staniszkis did not declare herself a conservative, and often sought, in her analysis, terms and tools associated with the leftist criticism of social relations.

⁴⁸ A. Hall, *Spór o Polskę. Rozmowa z Ewą Polak i Mariuszem Kobzdejem* (Warsaw: Rytm, 1993), 50.

⁴⁹ "Trzeba umieć powiedzieć: nie!," interview with J. Staniszkis by Z. Lipiński, *Nowy Świat*, February 22-23, 1992.

Her theses allowed conservatives to abandon their faith in automatic market regulation, and, politically, to step outside the boundaries of simple postulates of settling accounts—for de-communicization or lustration—and to take in the systemic character of post-communism. This was a position close to the institutionalists, who sought the reason for the weakness of the state in the power of the post-communist segment. The term “political capitalism” coined by Staniszkis became popular in descriptions of concrete instances of abuse of the governing SLD and the Polish People's Party (*Polskie Stronnictwo Ludowe*, PSL).

Staniszkis offered another interesting diagnosis which claimed that the new system was in fact de-territorialized, or “it is in its larger part out of the reach of the tools of action available to the state,” while the state itself “is degraded or degrades itself by shying away from responsibility as it moves agendas and funds into areas over which it has no control. The civilizational selection is made as if in a dream, over our heads and with no public debate.”⁵⁰ After the creation of PiS and a clear bonding of most conservative circles with the said party, a harsh critic of post-communism became standard procedure, made all the more intensive by various scandals concerning the SLD party which were revealed after 2003, and also by the debate around the IPN and its strategy of releasing and researching files created by the communist secret service. Conservatism became a synonym for anti-communism after communism and of a definite opposition to the practices of the post-communist government after 1993 and 2001.

Conclusion

To complete this account of positions and convictions, I must add that they were the domain of the young, and the very young. When *Sylwetki Polityczne XIX wieku* was published, Marcin Król was 30 years old. The signatories of the ideological declaration of the RMP were even younger—Jacek Bartyzel was 23, Aleksander Hall 26, and Marek Jurek was 19. Andrzej Nowak took the helm of the *Arka* at 32, Kazimierz M. Ujazdowski took the post of deputy at 27, and founded his own party before his 30th birthday. Jan Rokita was, at 30, vice-chairman of the Citizen's Parliamentary Caucus (*Obywatelski Klub Parlamentarny*, OKP),

⁵⁰ J. Staniszkis, *Postkomunizm. Próba opisu* (Gdańsk: słowo-obraz-terytoria, 2001), 90, 92-93.

and three years later, chairman of the Office of the Council of Ministers and de facto the brains of Suchocka's office. Wiesław Walendziak was 27 when he took over the editor's post for *Młoda Polska*, and the founder and long-time editor of the monarchist *Pro Fide, Rege et Lege*, Artur Górski, began publishing the slim pamphlet at 18.

It is not surprising in this context that the conservative opinion journalism of the first decade of the Third Republic is a "song of innocence," to quote Blake's poetic series. Their books, ideological manifests, party programs, and projects for new publications did not benefit from the supervision of experienced mentors. They were written from the perspective of the first disappointments of young activists: disappointment with the Solidarity elite and with the fall of moral and intellectual authorities during the maturing process of the eighties. As a result, these works are better defined morally, as if to spite the relativist generation of "older brothers." They are more contrary and more provocative and hold true to the position, which they express: a position of critical and anti-establishment ideological margin.

The second decade is filled with "songs of experience"—they are bitter, often filled with resentment and the feeling that certain things proved to be "too difficult." Cheerful moralists give way to reproachful accusations or expressions of surrender. Literary reckoning takes the form of novels as well as opinion pieces (Cezary Michalski, Andrzej Horubała, Paweł Lisicki). These "songs of experience" were not simply a bemoaning of youthful hopes, but often became a pragmatic revision of political goals, a more conscious and level-headed description of existing problems and tools of change. The unfulfilled coalition of PO and PiS, the many frailties of Jarosław Kaczyński's coalition with LPR and Samoobrona, the disappointment with the abandoned program of political anti-post-communism; all of these things led to further "mature" reckonings.

Conservatism became—as I described above—an influential intellectual current and a position capable of articulating the convictions of a certain generation. This generation sought a path beyond the revisionist schemes so popular among those born directly after the Second World War. This generation grew up in times of religious vivacity linked to John Paul II's pontificate and in times of hope for reclaiming freedom awakened by Solidarity in 1980. Conservatism was a school of dealing with the wave of socio-cultural changes that followed the occidentalization after 1989. It was a school that rose out of a religious outlook on reality, but which gladly borrowed from the language of Anglo-Saxon neoconservatives.

As an intellectual position, conservatism did not become the foundation for any significant political movement. However, it constituted an important part of cultural disputes that touched on the identity of every modern community. It was the other side of an argument with the liberal and leftist elites so unquestioningly devoted to occidentalization. Zdzisław Krasnodębski wrote: "The symptom of underdevelopment and retardation is the orientation of elites towards foreign centres, and their better identification with these centres than with the layers of their own society."⁵¹

The "other Right" was characteristic in its dislike of liberalism. This was caused mostly by an instrumentalization of that direction of thought, which Zdzisław Krasnodębski described very fittingly some years later. Both "practical" and "appropriable" liberalism had become an ideology that defended the government against the majority opinion; it had become a tool of repression against all those whose line of thinking did not match the intellectual elite of the Third Republic. Mistrust of liberalism was a result of the experience described by Krasnodębski that unlike the liberalism of Western Europe, born from "a mistrust towards those in power," liberalism in Poland "formed itself from a deep mistrust of citizens who were assumed too immature to embrace it."⁵²

Standing in opposition, conservatism gained significantly in the area of the situational strategy of certain elites. It supplied these elites with the status of defenders of local diversity, of opposition to the over-eager servilism of other elite groups. Furthermore, it widened the field of political choice, often reduced to a quicker or slower enactment of the guidelines provided by the EU and the International Monetary Fund. Nevertheless it never achieved a position of development alternative, even from a purely intellectual point of view. The "game played with modernity" was abandoned for the sake of a diverse, yet interesting critique. This may yet prove useful, as, to quote Krasnodębski yet again, "the philosophical discourse of modernity was always, simultaneously, a critique of modernity. [...] Modern civilization came into existence with the awareness of its own pathological state."⁵³

⁵¹ Z. Krasnodębski, "O czasach postpatriotycznych" in *Drzemka rozsądnych* (Cracow: OMP-WSE, 2006), 49.

⁵² Z. Krasnodębski, *Demokracja peryferii* (Gdańsk: słowo-obraz-terytoria, 2001), 51.

⁵³ Krasnodębski, *Demokracja peryferii*, 217.

The Abortion of a “Conservative” Constitution-Making

A Discourse Analysis of the 1994–1998 Failed Hungarian Constitution-making Enterprise

ZOLTÁN GÁBOR SZÜCS

Introduction

The aim of this paper is to give an interpretation of the aborted constitution-making enterprise that was initiated and developed under the socialist-liberal government between 1994 and 1998. I assert that this failed constitution-making process was based on a consensualist vision of politics¹ that prevailed in Hungary during and immediately after the democratic transition, and its fate was determined by the decline and fall of this vision. The origins of this consensualism can be traced back to the last decades of the communist rule and played a role in the consolidation of the Kádár-regime as well as in its peaceful dissolution. The early grand-scale societal, economic and political reforms of the democratic transition were also due to the consensus of the political and professional elites. We have enough documentary evidence to think that the promoters of the 1994-98 constitution-making process understood their motion as a mere continuation (what is more a symbolic consummation) of the transition process.²

¹ The term “vision of politics” I borrowed from the title of Quentin Skinner’s book but without any claim to apply his conceptual apparatus in this analysis. I may just as well use “political outlook” or “understanding of politics” etc. What is important in this respect is that consensualism was a principle underlying the political reasoning in a great deal of very different cases. See Q. Skinner, *Visions of Politics*, 1–3 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006).

² For example, Socialist MP Zoltán Gál, who was the chair of the constitution-drafting committee, said: “As it is known, the preparatory work on the codification of a new constitution which would construct a modern, democratic state based on the rule of law had begun already in the 1980s. The laws that made the political regime change possible and received their content in the course of the Roundtable Talks were born. The political pre-conditions for the new constitution were still lacking. The agreement about the modifica-

As is well known, Hungary was one of the two East Central European countries that did not draft an entirely new constitution during the democratic transition.³ The rewriting of the old constitution was a deliberate strategy followed by the opposition parties when they made an agreement with the Communist Party at the Roundtable Talks. What they intended to do was to lay down the politico-legal foundations of the democratic transition, not to build a new democratic regime.⁴ They had at least two reasons to do so. First, it was the best way to avoid giving too many concessions to the communists—the Polish example seemed to teach them that lesson). Second, they felt that they did not have enough legitimacy to make the final arrangements of the democratic polity.⁵ A series of modifications in the old constitution (although, in the course of the Roundtable Talks, the number of changes grew so long that in reality only some sentences

tion of the old constitution laid down the legal foundations for the peaceful transition into parliamentary democracy, social market economy, and the rule of law, and it provided a chance for the newly elected parliament after 1990 to draft a new constitution. However, the energies of the government were spent on the task of adjusting the whole legal system to the renewed constitution. Therefore, the making of the new constitution waits for the present Parliament. This task was considered important by all significant political parties as can be seen from the fact that all of them put the promise of a new constitution on their platforms.” I. Somogyvári and Z. Kisfaludy, ed., *Az Országgyűlés Alkotmány-előkészítő munkájának dokumentumai, 1994–1998*, 1, (Budapest: Center for Parliamentary Management, 1998), 70.

³ J. Elster, C. Offe, and U. K. Preuss, *Institutional Design in Post-Communist Societies: Rebuilding the Ship at Sea* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 63–108. It was Andrew Arato who developed a theory of “post sovereign constitution making” after the model of the Hungarian and Polish examples. A. Arato, “Redeeming the Still Redeemable and Post Sovereign Constitution Making,” *Journal of Politics, Culture, and Society* 22, 4 (December 2009): 427–443.

⁴ The metaphor of “alap” (foundation) was often coined at the Roundtable Talks as the interpretation of the agreement between the communists and the opposition parties. See Zoltán Gábor Szűcs, *Az antalli pillanat: A nemzeti történelem szerepe a magyar politikai diskurzusban, 1989–1993* (Budapest: L’Harmattan, 2010), 88.

⁵ This problem resurfaced when extreme right subcultures invented the conspiracy theory of a “Rózsadomb pact” as an alternative narrative of the democratic transition in which the USA, the Soviet Union, the Israeli and European powers outlined the script of the transition. For a good journalistic summary of this theory see http://www.komment.hu/tartalom/20090225-velemeney-a-rozsadombi-paktum-mint-osszeeskuves-elmelet-hattere.html?SYsref=NONE&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=web&cd=1&ved=0CCIQFjAA&url=http%253A%252F%252Fwww.komment.hu%252Ftartalom%252F20090225-velemeney-a-rozsadombi-paktum-mint-osszeeskuves-elmelet-hattere.html&ei=V9dOUITsMM_Esway4oDoCw&usg=AFQjCNGNY6L5ub0zU8rkqAAD9TWeePCRJg&cmnt_page=1 (accessed January 4, 2014).

were preserved of the original text) seemed the best way to guarantee the democratic transition without constraining the freedom of action of the future democratic legislation.⁶

The preamble of the rewritten constitution declared its transitional character stating, "For the sake of promoting the peaceful political transition into state of the rule of law that would realize political pluralism, parliamentary democracy, and social market economy, the parliament established the text of the Constitution of the Hungarian Republic as follows." Based on this intention and the prevalence of a consensualist political vision during the early 1990s, it was plausible to think that a new constitution should be written as soon as possible after the democratic transition and that this new constitution should be accepted in a consensual manner. As we will see, the whole procedure of the 1994-98 constitution-making process was built on these principles. Thus its failure foreshadowed the decline of the consensualist vision of politics.

After the failure of the 1994-98 constitution-making enterprise, the issue of constitution -making became increasingly the expression of conflicting political identities. After the victory of a right-wing coalition, as the finished constitution draft was off the agenda, the whole question became a cleavage point between the governing coalition and the socialist-liberal opposition. The motion of the minor coalition party's Minister of Justice to rename the old constitution from "Act XX of 1949" to "Act I of 2000" in order to do away with its uneasy origins was more than a mere technical issue. Rather, it was a product of the "millenniarist" rhetoric of the new government in which a moral and political renewal of Hungary was intertwined with the end of the twentieth century and the millennium of Hungarian statehood.⁷ As this moralizing rhetoric of renewal became a kind of benchmark of the Hungarian Right, the socialists and the liberals

⁶ About the Roundtable Talks see Zoltán Ripp, *Rendszerváltás Magyarországon, 1987–1990* (Budapest: Napvilág, 2006); András Bozóki, *Politikai pluralizmus Magyarországon, 1987–2002*, (Budapest: Századvég, 2003); András Bozóki et al., ed., *A rendszerváltás foratókönyve*, 1–5, (Budapest: Új Mandátum, 1999–2000).

⁷ The minister, Ibolya Dávid, said in a debate in 1999: "the reference to the Act XX of 1949 should be erased from the title of the constitution; we would like to replace the preamble that emphasized the transitionality with one that would be good enough for a thousand-year-old country; and the chapter about the fundamental rights should take its proper place in the structural system of the constitution." http://parlament.hu/internet/plsql/ogy_naplo.naplo_fadat?p_ckl=36&p_uln=107&p_felsz=2&p_szoveg=%28%20alkotm%E1ny%20or%20szent%20istv%E1n%20%29&p_felszig=2 (accessed January 4, 2014).

started to call into question the necessity of making a new constitution.⁸ Interestingly, the socialist-liberal coalition, even after their return to power in 2002, did not entail a return to the 1994–98 constitution-making process either. Instead, there occurred some faint attempts to begin the work afresh, but these soon died away as they became public.⁹

Explaining the failure of these recent undertakings is the emergence of a new public discourse that asserted that the 1989 constitution was entirely new, and which, together with the interpretations of the constitutional courts, has grown into one of the most significant achievements of the new democratic polity. It was also a part of this discourse that there is no reason to make a new constitution. If politicians insisted on constitution-making, it would have been best to change the text of the current one as little as possible. Although this discourse infiltrated the socialist-liberal parties as well, it was defended most fiercely by lawyers, among whom a number of *par excellence* conservative intellectuals played a prominent role. Thus a “conservative view of the constitution-making” fits this discourse even better than the one between 1994 and 1998.¹⁰

What created a radically new situation in this story was the landslide victory of the conservative-national parties in 2010,¹¹ because the two-thirds majority of the new governing coalition in parliament set the choice before them either to keep themselves to the consensualist way of making

⁸ But before that, they made a last effort in 1999 to renew the 1994–1998 constitution-making process. The motion was introduced by three socialist MPs: György Wiener, a socialist MP and constitutional lawyer, Balázs Csákabonyi and Dezső Avarkeszi. http://parlament.hu/internet/plsql/ogy_irom.irom_adat?p_ckl=36&p_izon=1838 (accessed January 4, 2014).

⁹ For example, Minister of Justice, József Petréttei outlined a draft in 2006, but it was never discussed in public. Even the document was only published by the *Hírszerző* blog in 2011. <https://docs.google.com/file/d/0BzvAZNwR8mVjNzc3OGQxNmMtYTMlYS00NTE5LThjYTMtZmZkYTJYzFkMjU5/edit?hl=en&authkey=COTAusAI&pli=1> (accessed January 4, 2014).

¹⁰ A monument of this veneration for the 1989 constitution was erected by a grandiose project initiated by László Sólyom (a former chair of the Constitutional Court and later the President of the Hungarian Republic) and coordinated by András Jakab that was published in a two-volume form of *Az alkotmány kommentárja* by the Századvég publishing house, a right-wing think-tank, in 2009. The project involved the collaboration of about 50 constitutional lawyers and attempted to plant German legal genres into the Hungarian juristic discourse. Ironically, the work lost its momentum the moment it was published. *Az alkotmány kommentárja*, 1–2 (Budapest: Századvég, 2009).

¹¹ The best political science analysis of the elections is provided by Z. Enyedi, A. Szabó, R. Tardos, ed., *Új képlet: A 2010-es választások Magyarországon* (Budapest: Demokrácia Kutatások Magyar Központja Alapítvány, 2011).

a new constitution at their own discretion or to open a new chapter in the history of Hungarian constitutionalism and draft a partisan constitution. After a short period of uncertainty, the coalition chose the second way, the result of which was a heavily debated Basic Law with a strongly ideological National Avowal as its preamble, which came under especially harsh criticism.¹² Leftist intellectuals, unusually radical in their view of the constitution-making process, openly discussed in public journals whether—in case the successor government was not supported by the parliamentary super-majority needed to revoke the constitution—it would be possible to nullify the new Basic Law on the basis of its unconstitutionality or if a plebiscite would be needed.¹³ It goes without saying that these debates were clear expressions of the end of the age of consensualism and were reactions to the renaissance of partisanship in the first decade of the new millennium.

After this short overview of a great transformation of Hungarian political thought that underlay the change of opinion surrounding the issue of constitution-making from the 1990s to the 2010s, it is time to restate the aim of the paper in a more detailed form. The aim is to trace the clues of the transformation focusing on the moment when the predominance of the consensualist vision began to decline. To show this process, the first section of my paper gives a short summary of the 1994-98 constitution-making enterprise. The second section analyzes the arguments of the constitution-making debates from the perspective of consensualism. The third section, finally, contrasts the history of the birth of the Basic Law with the case of the 1994-98 constitution-making enterprise.

¹² The National Confession was analyzed by the conservative political philosopher, Ferenc Horkay Hörcher in a somewhat apologetic manner in F. Horkay Hörcher, “A Nemzeti hitvallásról” in *Alkotmányozás Magyarországon és máshol*, ed. A. Jakab and A. Körösné-nyi, (Budapest: MTA TK PTI – Új Mandátum. 2012), 287–309.

¹³ In 2011, mostly the popular weekly of the liberal intelligentsia, *Élet és irodalom*, provided space for these discussions of which the most prominent contributors were the Eötvös Károly Közpolitikai Intézet led by the former ombudsman, László Majtényi, Mátyás Eörsi, a former liberal MP, Viktor Szigetvári, a former spin doctor of the socialist prime ministers, Csaba Tordai, a constitutional lawyer and a former state secretary at the Office of the Prime Minister etc.

The Events of the 1994-98 Constitution-making

The consensualist intention of the 1994-98 constitution-making enterprise was evident even from the government's program. This document declared that "in order to finish the political transition, *create national consensus*, and lay the foundations for the stability of constitutionalism, the government is committed to making a new constitution. The drafting will be brought about through extensive *professional and public debates*, by drawing lessons from domestic and international *legal studies* and the developments of modern states. The procedures will be built on the *broadest possible national consensus* to enforce the social acceptance of the constitution."¹⁴

According to the original schedule, the government planned to complete the procedure with a referendum in the second half of 1995. At that time, it was also presumed that the Minister of Justice would coordinate the work, and he set out to arrange the procedure by establishing a Secretariat for the Preparation of the Constitution within the Ministry of Justice and officially asked for the professional contribution of the Legal Institute of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences to the work. The result of this work was almost a hundred studies discussing various parts of the constitutional agenda, as well as two comprehensive conceptions for the future constitution; the conception of the Legal Institute was elaborated by András Bragyova (later a judge of the Constitutional Court), while the conception of the ministry was authored by a committee of eight experts. After the cabinet accepted the report of the minister in March 1995, a period of domestic and international consultations started ranging from the MPs of the coalition parties to civic society, professional organizations, and the Venice Commission of the Council of Europe.¹⁵

Despite this seemingly unproblematic progress, the parliamentary process seldom proceeded. The parliament decided only in May 1995 to establish a committee for the preparation of the new constitution that gave equal representation to each parliamentary party, and regulated the drafting process. The regulation included strong restrictions on the legislative influence of the governing parties that had a two-thirds constitutional ma-

¹⁴ I. Somogyvári, "Alkotmányozás Magyarországon, 1994–1998" in *Az Országgyűlés Alkotmány-előkészítő munkájának dokumentumai, 1994–1998*, ed. I. Somogyvári and Z. Kisfaludy, 1 (Budapest: Center for Parliamentary Management, 1998), 20.

¹⁵ A difference that stands out when compared to the process of the preparation of the Basic Law.

jority when requiring a four-fifths majority in parliament to accept the principles of the new constitution, it also required a five-sixths majority within the committee for the preparation of the new constitution.

The committee began work on October 5, 1995, and it soon set aside the materials of the Ministry of Justice, starting the whole job afresh. This was a decision that, as it turned out later, proved fatal to the cause of constitution-making. When the parliamentary committee, after a long and complicated debate, introduced its proposal about the principles of the new constitution to the parliament in March 1996, the schedule included the date of final voting on the proposal as July 3, 1996. However, the final voting was prolonged for a considerably long time, since the voting on the modifications of the proposal on June 27, 1996 ended with an astonishing result: some members of the cabinet voted against the proposal (supposedly, it happened because the Minister of Justice¹⁶ reported that the proposal of the committee contained unacceptable terms), and this fact was interpreted by the opposition parties as an open violation of the preliminary agreements.

It came as no surprise that, after this incident, the opposition parties did not want to continue the drafting process or continue negotiations. It took until September 1996 for the discussions to reopen. Although, on December 17, parliament accepted the proposal of the committee and authorized it to elaborate the text of the constitution until March 1997, the constitution gradually became a lost cause: in March 1997, the committee still did not set about its new work; and it took one more year to complete the task and draft a text that contained 43 textual alternatives at various points. By then, because parliament finished its work on March 16, 1998, all the parties agreed that the draft should not even be presented, let alone be discussed.

Some might argue that the failure to accept the principles of the new constitution in June 1996 entailed only a short pause in the process, and we should question the opposition's interpretation of the events and the cabinet's responsibility for presumably failing to produce a constitution. For example, some have claimed that had the opposition MPs been present in larger numbers, the failure of the voting could have been avoided. Still, it remains a fact beyond doubt that the result of the voting opened a great opportunity for the opposition to slow the whole process down and successfully accuse the government of violating its own promises.

¹⁶ The minister was obviously frustrated by the loss of control over the constitution-making process, as it was later confirmed informally to me by Mihály Bihari, the former socialist member of the parliamentary committee.

The Conservatism of the 1994-98 Draft

We saw above that the socialist-liberal coalition really stuck to a consensualist vision of politics. They started a constitution-making process on the basis of “national consensus,” “professional and public consultations,” and constitutional restriction of their own qualified majority. We can even identify the moment of hubris on the part of the socialists: it occurred when their Minister of Justice counseled the cabinet to derail the consensual procedure.

The conservatism of the enterprise came from its consensualism. One can imagine a situation where a national consensus is needed for a radical reform, but the 1994-98 constitution-making procedure was not of that kind. It was intended to finish the political transition and put the icing on the cake, and since the Hungarian political transition was supposed to be a gradual and not a revolutionary one, the new constitution had to be continuous with the rewritten pre-1989 text. This commitment to continuity was expressed in the regulation of the parliamentary committee saying that the old text should be retained where there was no consensus about a new version.

The conservatism of constitution-making was highlighted by the participants of the public debates. For example, Liberal MP Péter Hack said that it was time to complete the new constitution because the “process of the conservative constitution-making reached a point... where there is no reason to continue further discussions of certain questions.”¹⁷ Similarly, Socialist MP Mihály Bihari mentioned the “need for legal continuity” when drafting a constitution.¹⁸ An MP of opposition party Fidesz, József Szájer (the author of the 2010 Basic Law), also said: “there is no need to change the foundations of the democratic institutions as they were established in 1989 and 1990. In this sense, the Fidesz wanted a conservative constitution.”¹⁹ The independent MP, László Salamon, who was formerly

¹⁷ Somogyvári and Kisfaludy, ed., *Az Országgyűlés Alkotmány-előkészítő munkájának dokumentumai*, 81.

¹⁸ Ibidem, 94.

¹⁹ Ibidem, 103. His speech is especially interesting from our perspective because it mostly articulated the Fidesz’s commitment to certain constitutional values and used a martial rhetoric as if it were his (as well as his party’s) urgent task to stand up for values endangered by the socialist-liberal cabinet, but otherwise the speech discussed the same themes as the other speeches. The combative and lofty rhetoric and the content of the speech were in obvious contradiction and demonstrated the beginning of the decline of the politics of consensus.

a member of the conservative Hungarian Democratic Forum (*Magyar Demokrata Fórum*, MDF) and later became a leading politician of the Fidesz, emphasized that the most important advantage of the current draft was its conservative nature. As he said, “It’s good that the authors of the principles of the new constitution resisted the temptation of *l’art pour l’art innovation*.”²⁰

Put differently, the constitution-making was to be based on principles of “national consensus” and a “conservative” interpretation of the democratic polity. This kind of consensualism was not without precedent in Hungarian politics. On the contrary, the idea of consensual legislation and cautious changes was strongly supported by the system of the so-called two-thirds majority laws that in a normal case would need the cooperation of the governing parties and the opposition. For this reason, governments were regularly forced to reach a consensus even in cases where they originally held the initiative. For example, in 1990, the government had to rewrite its proposal concerning local government when it was faced with a strong opposition.²¹ In 1996, the parliament passed a law on media that was designed to end debates about governmental influence over the mass media (a period which was even termed “Kulturkampf”) on a consensual basis. What was unique to the 1994–1998 constitution-making process was its failure, so complete that it could not be compared to any other issues in Hungarian politics.²²

Why did it happen? A possible answer could begin by stating the fact that the socialist-liberal coalition lost the 1998 elections and a coalition of the former right-wing opposition parties led by Viktor Orbán succeeded them. It seems plausible to say that the right-wing forces opposed the whole constitution-making process as it had been conducted by the social-

²⁰ Ibidem, 118.

²¹ Szűcs, *Az antalli pillanat*, 147–162.

²² Interestingly, the 1996 media law also did not put an end to the political conflicts around the mass-media. After 1998, it was the socialist and liberal parties who became the proponents of the need for a better regulation because of the apparent political abuses of the law on the part of the national conservative parties. Those who originally initiated the 1996 law became the most committed critics because of the large number of its errors and loopholes, and it was the national conservative coalition that unilaterally made a new regulation in 2010. In a sense, we can say that the fate of these motions needing government opposition cooperation that was initiated between 1994 and 1998 is the best indicator of the decline and fall of consensualism. However, the success of passing the media law and the failure of the constitution-making are stories that cannot be equated without risking to overlook the exceptional significance of the constitution-making process.

ist-liberal parties. The right-wing parties also opposed specifics within the text. Although this explanation has its merits,²³ it cannot explain the striking contradiction between the early descriptions of the constitution-making process as a conservative or a consensual one on the part of the governing parties and the refutation of the 1994–1998 constitution by the former opposition as a socialist-liberal *partisan* project.

Here should be something more than merely the succession of power from one political coalition to another. During the constitution-making process, rightist politicians (especially the Fidesz and MDF) cooperated with the majority and their objections against the process were limited to such questions as why it was important to draft a new constitution just now²⁴ or whether they would have enough time to finish the process before the 1998 elections? Even if we can recognize the signs of a kind of resentment against the possibility of successfully making a new constitution under the rule of a socialist-liberal coalition, we cannot find a rejection of the whole enterprise in records. The only moment when they used a radical rhetoric against the constitution-making was the above-mentioned defeat of the proposal about the principles and structure of the future constitution. The reaction to this surprising failure was almost hysterical: rightist politicians spoke about the “betrayal of consensual politics” and also about the “appearance of the true nature” of the Socialists.²⁵ And, as we saw already, it took months until they returned to the topic of drafting.

²³ It is a known fact that the term “alkotmányozás” (constitution-making) emerges only twelve times in the official records of Parliament between 1998 and 2002. Moreover, it was usually the opposition that coined it.

²⁴ For example, the Christian Democrat MP, Tamás Isépy claimed that “we must not speak of any “state of emergency” in the point of constitution-making.” Somogyvári and Kisfaludy, ed., *Az Országgyűlés Alkotmány-előkészítő munkájának dokumentumai*, 99. Similarly, József Szájer, quoted LászlóTrócsányi’s words: “the Hungarian public legal traditions oblige the constitution-makers to proceed with necessary self-restraint and consideration in the course of drafting the new constitution that would embody the national consensus.” Ibidem, 105.

²⁵ For example, the Fidesz’s MP, János Áder said in an obviously irritated manner shortly after the voting: “[the socialists] broke the consensus, the attempt to make a consensual constitution as we had agreed eight months ago.” Ibidem, 758. The Christian Democrat MP, Tamás Isépy asked: “I am asking now: who did break the agreement?” Ibidem, 759. Imre Kónya, an MP of the Hungarian Democratic People’s Party: “It is without precedent that it was the government that is responsible for the stability that broke the agreement.” Ibidem, 760. Ervin Demeter, an MP of the Hungarian Democrats: “In our opinion, this situation has no precedent, and it questions the sincerity of the intentions [of the government] and of the governing majority.” Ibidem, 761.

This lack of explicit rejection of the legitimacy of the constitution-making before 1998 means that any later shift in the evaluation of the enterprise from a consensual to a partisan one needed either to ignore the procedural guarantees of the drafting process or to debunk the hidden political maneuvers of the socialist-liberal coalition behind the curtains of a seemingly consensual procedure. What right-wing politicians really presented when they were confronted with the fate of the 1994–1998 constitution-making process was a mixture of suggestions and intimations, but there was no elaborate discussion of the issue. But what is also striking is that they never initiated a new constitution-making procedure between 1998 and 2002 that could have proved more consensual or conservative (in the above sense) than the 1994–1998 process. Rather, as we also saw, they said something like “now is not the time to make a new constitution” and later merely proposed to change the name of the old constitution from Act XX of 1949 to Act I of 2000.

This strategy of reticence on the part of the right-wing coalition, which can be well contrasted with their otherwise radical rhetoric of overall societal and political changes,²⁶ suggests that the criteria of consensus and conservatism lost their legitimizing power after the fall of the socialist-liberal coalition. Had it not happened, the governing parties presumably could not have chosen other than to continue with the constitution-making process.

This suggestion can also be underpinned by the events after 2010 when a qualified majority of the right-wing coalition that returned to power after eight years of opposition—led again by Viktor Orbán—drafted a new constitution without any substantive contribution from the leftist parties, and they legitimized their actions by reference to their two-thirds majority in parliament as a direct mandate. They also described their constitutional enterprise as a part of the so-called “revolution at the ballot boxes” (a term coined by Viktor Orbán immediately after the voting).²⁷ And it goes without saying that a consensus of political elites or any sort of conservatism runs counter to the notion of a “revolution.”

But how can we account for the apparent discursive differences between the two constitution-making processes, that is, for the differences between the conservative and the revolutionary one? There was much more at stake than rhetoric in this both conceptual and political change in

²⁶ One of their most popular slogans was “More than a change of government, less than a change of system” in 1998.

²⁷ http://www.miniszterelnok.hu/beszed/forradalom_tortent_a_szavazofulkeken (accessed January 4, 2014).

Hungarian political thought. What came about here was the fall of one kind of vision of politics in which consensus played a significant role and also the emergence of another vision in which political consensus is downplayed and the struggle of conflicting values is emphasized instead.

It is important to emphasize that consensus was clearly a normative ideal of the political debates, not really an existing political practice. Indeed it was a key concept that assumed a number of different meanings ranging from the classical notion of shared common values to mere agreement or compromise between different standpoints, but its asymmetric counter-concept²⁸ was undeniably conflict. In the early 1990s, no politicians dared to speak about substantial differences of perspectives in politics and to recognize their equivalence or at least the immutability of the differences. Even the liberals assumed the policy's foundational unity or, if not, they condemned the other perspectives as anti-democratic ones. Similarly, the right-wing politicians used the notion of political conflicts as a means of exclusion from the political community.

By contrast, a growing sense of fundamental differences between the two poles of the political culture began to spread in Hungarian political discourse from the late 1990s. This process became manifest in the pillarization of the printed and electronic media, the decline and fall of technocratic ideals of policy-making, the emptying of the political center in the citizens' political attitudes,²⁹ and the stability of a bipolar party-system for more than a decade.³⁰ As a specific answer to this development the political parties recurrently initiated campaigns to reposition themselves from a non-ideologically defined political "center" that had been so popular hitherto among them to ideologically distinct positions. For example, the Socialists deployed the "let's be leftists" slogan (*"Merjünk baloldalinak lenni!"*) in 2006, the Liberal Party amended the name of Alliance of Free Democrats with "Hungarian Liberal Party" in 2005, and the leader of the MDF compiled a "conservative manifesto" in 2004. It was a kind of ren-

²⁸ R. Koselleck, "The Historical-Political Semantics of Asymmetric Counterconcepts", in *Futures past. On the Semantics of Historical Time*, trans. by K. Tribe (New York, Columbia University Press), 155–191.

²⁹ R. Angelusz and R. Tardos, "Régi és új törésvonalak, polarizáció, divergenciaspirál" in *Részvétel, képviselet, politikai változás*, ed. R. Tardos, Z. Enyedi and A. Szabó (Budapest: Demokrácia Kutatások Magyar Központja Alapítvány, 2011), 347–382.

³⁰ Z. Enyedi, B. Kenneth, "Kritikus választás 2010. A magyar pártrendszer átrendeződése a bal–jobb dimenzióban" in *Új képlet. Választások Magyarországon, 2010*, ed. Z. Enyedi, A. Szabó and R. Tardos (Budapest: Demokrácia Kutatások Magyar Központja Alapítvány, 2011), 17–42.

naissance of politics in that all political actors turned their attention to the role of disagreement in politics.

From the middle of the 1990s the emergence of the new predominantly right-wing political party (Fidesz) played a prominent, though somewhat ambiguous, role in this political renaissance. On the one hand, no other party pushed the consequences of the bipolar characteristic of Hungarian politics further than they did. There is a very strong continuity in the “us and them” rhetoric of the Fidesz from the early 1990s to now. This rhetoric always emphasized the insurmountable differences between the Hungarian Left and Right, it also presented parliamentary elections as an ultimate choice between two worlds, past and future, (post-)communists and patriots. In this sense, Fidesz was a major promoter of the political renaissance. However, we should keep in mind that partisanship was certainly not described in the Fidesz’s rhetoric as a peaceful contest between equal adversaries, but as an asymmetric struggle between good and bad.³¹ Thus, on the other hand, this asymmetry (that can be compared to the asymmetric conceptualization of political struggles between democrats and anti-democrats in the leftist and liberal discourses of the day) meant that partisanship was not understood as an ideal state of political contest by them, but as a step towards the moral renewal of the political community on the basis of commonly shared values. As we will see later, the rhetoric of Fidesz can be understood as much a rhetoric of new national consensus as an apology of partisanship and conflict.

The consensualist vision of the early 1990s was a complex interplay between various discursive traditions.³² First, it was a direct consequence

³¹ E.g. Viktor Orbán said in the campaign in 2002 “Still our life is something more than merely a struggle for survival. And it is this something more that makes our life really beautiful; it is this that really matters.” <http://www.gemenc.hu/sajtoklub/TestnevEgy> (accessed January 5, 2015).

³² Although, in the following, I will emphasize the emancipatory and dissident features of the consensual vision of politics within the Hungarian context, we should not overlook the increasingly consensualist and conservative undertones of the late Kádár-regime because this latter fact also contributed to the persistent popularity of the ideas of consensus and cautious reforms. The term “nemzeti konszenzus” (national consensus) was used in official documents at least from the 1970s and the symbolic politics of the communist regime began to return to the conservative traditions of the Hungarian political thought (especially to the person of Count István Széchenyi, a hero of the nineteenth century liberal nationalist reform movement as well as an idol of the ultra-conservative Horthy-regime in the twentieth century) as it was uncovered by the dissident historian, Miklós Szabó in a series of excellent essays. M. Szabó, *Politikai kultúra Magyarországon, 1896–1986* (Budapest: Medvetánc, 1986).

of the rhetoric of the “national consensus” of the late Kádár-regime that was transmitted to the new democratic regime by the peaceful process of political transition. After the 1956 revolution and the reprisals, the communist regime increasingly endeavored to base its rule on the expressed consent of the people. The incessant growth of social expenditure from the late 1960s, cautious reform policies around 1968 and later in the late 1970s, the lack of open political repressions, the propagation of a “welfare nationalism” against the national-communism of some of the neighboring communist regimes, the increasing dissociation of individualism in private life and public ideology, the popular cult of János Kádár as a puritan leader who hated any Stalinist cult of personality were all means of creating this national consensus. Second, although the Marxist grounds of the public discourse could never be questioned without risking oppressive responses, and Marxism remained the only legitimate ideological language in the public (apart from some nationalistic undertones). In the 1970s there began a kind of re-institutionalization of originally non-Marxist or “bourgeois” social, legal, and economic sciences.³³

And, as a side effect of this development, alternative *technocratic* descriptions of the political reality appeared in the public sphere, and the monopoly of the Marxist regime in the interpretation of the society, economy, and polity turned into a silent struggle between the ideological and “professional” discourses. In the professional discourses of the 1970s and 1980s, a number of politically sensitive issues came under discussion from demographic problems to class differences and poverty in a socialist country and on to the superiority of market over economic planning. In a certain sense, the result of this phenomenon was a pluralization of the public discourse. However, the relationship between ideology and expertise developed gradually into a total refusal of ideology and an anti-political rhetoric of expertise. It is more than a mere coincidence that the last communist cabinet declared itself independent from the Communist Party as a “government of experts” in 1989. Partly, it could have happened because it was a logical way of interpreting the decline and fall of the communist regime in the form of a narrative of the emancipation of

³³ This development was analyzed in-depth by a handful of books as, among others, A. Beckskeházi and T. Kuczi, *Valóság'70* (Budapest: Scientia Humana, 1992); E. Csizmadia, *Diskurzus és diktatúra* (Budapest: Századvég, 2001); A. Körösenyi, *Értelmiség, politikai gondolkodás és kormányzat* (Budapest: Osiris, 2000). For a broader Eastern European contextualization of this question see: P. D. Aligica and A. J. Evans, *The Neo-liberal Revolution in Eastern Europe: Economic Ideas in the Transition from Communism* (Cheltenham, Northampton: Edward Elgar, 2009).

reality (as it is described and explained by the experts) under the oppression of the ideology.

At this point, the discourse of technocracy became necessarily mingled with the Western, liberal narrative of the "end of history," the discourse of liberal democracy and neo-liberal economic policies. In this sense, technocracy conceptualized "consensus" as based on historical necessities, universal truths, and professional knowledge. Ironically, the reality of the experts was a typical counter-product of Marxism: it was a reality in which the economy still determined the societal superstructure, but the market proved better than Soviet-type economic planning. Still, paradoxically, any political voluntarism was judged as a mere ideological illusion if compared to the expertise-based policy-making, because voluntarism and economic planning were different sides of the same coin. The same applies to expertise and the refusal of statism. In this vision, politicians had to be deprived of agency in political processes and had to be oriented by experts.

Third, the various opposition groups of the Kádár-regime had a very strong *anti-political incentive* that included an asymmetrical conceptualization of open-minded discussion and consensus against partisanship and conflicts. This anti-political incentive was manifested in the uncertainties by the national populist and the democratic opposition groups as to whether they should found parties as well as their choice of names for their movements. The national party was named *Forum* and the liberal was named *Alliance* in the end. It comes as no surprise that anti-politics with its consensualist ideal remained present in the democratic political discourse as well.

Fourth, there is an underlying *tradition of compromise* of the Hungarian political culture³⁴ from the early modern age. The most famous examples of this cult of compromise are the compromises that ended the Rákóczi rebellion (in 1711), and the 1848–1949 War of Independence (as late as 1867). Moreover, the early modern Hungarian parliamentarianism was a mechanism of discussion between the nation (the Estates) and the king, and the acts of the early modern parliament were conceptualized as compromises between the two parties. This mechanism was termed "*tractatus dietalis*." Thus, it can be argued that making compromises played a prominent role in the Hungarian political culture, and this traditionally positive evaluation of compromises was symbolically exploited in the roundtable talks as well, where the example of Ferenc Deák, the main

³⁴ Cf. L. Péter, *Elbától keletre* (Budapest: Osiris, 1998).

author of the 1867 compromise, was often recalled. Similarly, compromise was a central piece of József Antall's political thought and was expressed usually in historical terms. Since he was the leader of the Forum of Hungarian Democrats and the first prime minister after the democratic elections, his specific understanding of compromise-centered political practice played its part in the Hungarian politics of the early 1990s.

Of these traditions, the technocratic discourse was of utmost importance in constitutional issues. To mention just one example, an opposition politician said during the 1994–1998 constitutional discussions, “fortunately, constitutional lawyers already determined exactly what role a constitution has, so we do not have to think about it.”³⁵ Put differently, the standard argument in the 1994–1998 debate was a technocratic one. It supposed that constitution-making is the business of constitutional lawyers. As a consequence, political consensus is always possible in these issues—at least in theory—because every political problem is supposed to have a certain rational and professionally grounded solution. The reasons for political disagreement are merely ideological or tactical. However, constitution-making is undoubtedly one of the most important political issues, and thus every ideological vested interest had to be subjected to the interests of making a proper constitution. In short, political consensus implied a symbolic expression of the lack of any serious political alternatives to liberal democracy.³⁶

Those who stayed outside the consensus risked their legitimacy in the world of democratic politics as demagogues or “anti-democratic” politicians, so those who did not want a new constitution were forced to accept the consensus as the rule of the democratic game and to present themselves as seeking consensus. Some parts of the right-wing opposition chose the first way, but the Fidesz picked the second one—and I argue that this choice can account for their strangely ambivalent attitudes toward

³⁵ Somogyvári and Kisfáludy, ed., *Az Országgyűlés Alkotmány-előkészítő munkájának dokumentumai, 1994–1998*, 96.

³⁶ A similar situation can be observed in the rhetoric of the East-Central European constitutional courts. These courts used a “moral realist” rhetoric when speaking about human rights, and put strong constraints on the freedom of action of the legislation and the executive branch. Some even argued that this “democracy by judiciary” (to coin Kim Lane Scheppele’s term) was not only by definition anti-democratic, but also had serious negative effects on the democratic education of the political actors of new democracies because both the politicians and the citizens began to see constitutional courts as arbiters of all the “sensitive” political issues. See Wojciech Sadurski, *Rights before courts* (Dordrecht: Springer, 2005).

the constitution-making process. Until 1998, the right-wing opposition did not have the discursive means to challenge the consensual vision of democratic politics, thus they had to take their part in the constitution making, even if they did not wish to do so.

On the other hand, the consensualist vision provided some arguments against making a new constitution between 1994 and 1998 as well. Hungary had a constitution after 1989, and it was based on the consensus of the parties that were present at the Roundtable Talks. Moreover, the re-writing of the text of the communist constitution established a liberal democratic polity, and none of the political actors doubted its liberal democratic features. Since the rhetoric of expertise usually suggested that every political problem has only one right solution, any changes in the institutional settings of the liberal democratic polity would need detailed argumentation and very careful consideration. It was the main reason for the self-description of the constitution-making process as a conservative one. They had to emphasize that making a new constitution would not threaten the democratic values of the post-1989 polity. Ironically, the right-wing opposition, that perhaps did not like the whole process, could only exploit this need for careful consideration in its rhetoric before 1998 when trying to slow the discussions down.

The failed constitution-making between 1994 and 1998 was the last great enterprise that was to be legitimized in the language of this commonly shared set of political principles, concepts, and rhetoric. After 1998, the new government tried to systematically undermine the validity of this vision of politics and replace it with a conflicting vision of politics.

2011 Basic Law as a Conflictual Vision of Politics

The shift of political visions was a slow process that came about almost unnoticed. Although the novelties of the politics represented by the Fidesz were detected and criticized by the liberal and leftist intellectuals from the late 1990s as symptoms of political cynicism, the emergence of a broader intellectual perspective received much less attention. It was only some marginal figures like the famous but lonely neo-Marxist philosopher Gáspár Miklós Tamás who supposed the existence of a system of ideas and attitudes behind the politics of the Fidesz,³⁷ but the others were stuck to the problems of how sincere or cynical the Fidesz really was. Meanwhile, a

³⁷ G. M. Tamás, "Új osztálypolitika," *Mozgó Világ* 1 (1999): 15–33.

number of isolated, but parallel developments signaled the decline of consensualism.³⁸ To mention just a few examples: the evaluation of the stabilizing economic policies of Socialist Minister of Finance Lajos Bokros (1995–1996) became a cleavage point between leftist and rightist economists. What was adored as an unorthodox, still neo-liberal masterpiece of policy-making by the Left was criticized as a mistake that had devastating effects on the Hungarian economy. In political science, the functionalist paradigm of the 1980s was replaced by various schools, most of which were interested in the effects of endogenous factors on politics; both in conservative and post-modern intellectual circles, Carl Schmitt's political theory had a momentum. There emerged a populous extreme right sub-culture with an alternative canon of Hungarian history and literature, and a racist discourse of political incorrectness. Put bluntly, the conflicting rhetoric of the Fidesz was as much a mere symptom of a broader intellectual change as a reason for the restructuring of Hungarian political discourse.

From this perspective, the making of the 2011 Basic Law was a logical consequence of the change of political visions, but even my interpretation might offer a somewhat misleading reconstruction of the story because the “revolutionary” self-description of the right-wing government in 2010 and 2011 was actually a coincidence of two different strands of the political discourse. First, the political behavior of the right-wing parties was based on their bias towards specific political values, which they interpreted as a reason to exclude the possibility of any consensual way of making a new constitution, but it did not suggest a “revolutionary” constitutional change in itself. In fact, some people were rather surprised when the Fidesz declared that they wanted to make a new constitution in 2010 because it was not explicitly part of their campaign and other issues might have seemed more important from an outsider's viewpoint. Second, when Fidesz won a qualified majority in Parliament in 2010, it was legally possible for the party to radically change the constitution without the consent of any other political actors and implement their specific political values into the constitution, and it was immediately interpreted by the party as a mandate to really bring about radical changes. As the future prime minister stated, “more votes would allow more radical changes.”

Although opposition publicists emphasize the radical expansion of the power of the executive through the re-ordering of the constitutional rela-

³⁸ Z. G. Szűcs, “A magyar politikai diskurzus változásai 2000 óta,” in *Van irány? Trendek a magyar politikában*, ed. A. Körösnéyi and Z. Boda (Budapest: MTA PTI, Új Mandátum, 2012), 128–51.

tionship of the various institutions and the extension of the right of appointment of the prime minister, these essentially sound criticisms are built on the current situation in which the government has an extraordinarily strong parliamentary support, and, therefore, these criticisms miss an important aspect of the making of the new constitution. As the right-wing rhetoric suggests, the “revolution” is intended to be an extraordinary moment in politics, a moment of re-founding of the polity, not a normal way of making politics, and the Basic Law is in reality full of institutional and procedural checks and balances to prevent a future government from exceeding the limits of the new constitution. It was explicitly stated by László Kövér, a prominent leader of the Fidesz, in the debate on the new constitution when he said, “[the new constitution] will be made not because of the two-thirds majority of the Fidesz and the Christian Democrats in Parliament, but because it is the first time that a minimal consensus of values—which is indispensable for a successful future—has the opportunity to gain a two-thirds support from the elected representatives.”³⁹ He also said that the main flaw in the construction of the democratic transition and the first two decades of the democratic politics was the assumption that a stable and meaningful democratic consensus between the former communists and all other people can be created. From this perspective, the new constitution has a twofold character. On the one hand, it is based on a conflicting vision of politics (a conflict between us and them). On the other hand, it is designed to become a firm legal foundation for a new political and moral consensus.⁴⁰

As a conclusion, we can say that the “revolution” is trying to return to a form of consensus (if not in the present, but in the future), but this “consensus” is not to be the same as the consensus of the extra-political developments, expert knowledge, and the liberal “end of history” of the 1994–1998 constitution-making enterprise. Rather, it would be a consensus of a political community of exclusive values.

³⁹ http://parlament.hu/internet/plsql/ogy_naplo.naplo_fadat?p_ckl=39&p_uln=76&p_felsz=13&p_szoveg=&p_felszig=13 (accessed January 4, 2014).

⁴⁰ Certainly, we have reasons to have but little trust in this self-interpretation: the legislative practice of the national-conservative cabinet was criticized fiercely by international organizations, the European Union as well as a number of various legal experts from Kim Lane Scheppele to László Sólyom and Gábor Halmai.

Syndrome or Symptom

Populism and Democratic Malaise in Post-Communist Romania^{*}

CAMIL ALEXANDRU PÂRVU

Most recent studies on populism seem to share a twin conclusion: first, that its concept still lacks a generally accepted definition; and second, that despite the conceptual ambiguities, we can trust our intuitions that distinctly populist phenomena are, indeed, increasingly prevalent. The question of this article is whether the concept of populism can serve as a useful explanatory tool in helping us understand some of the fundamental characteristics of Romanian post-communist politics and, if so, what exactly can it add to the already rich literature on the post-communist regime?

The first part of this contribution will look into the enduring complications and structural limitations that characterize the conceptual efforts around the notion of populism. Although definitions that might suitably fit multiple contexts are missing, there are still promising strategies for salvaging the concept and allowing for its use, albeit with precaution, in approaching specific iterations of populism.

In the second part, the focus will be on describing and analyzing the nature of what could constitute a rich concept of populism pertaining to post-communist Romania. The local contours of populism have significantly shifted in the last two decades, and recent evolutions point to a pervasive presence of populist rhetoric in both media and cross-spectrum political contexts. While various populist discourses sometimes share a number of significant common roots, there are also distinct sources that evade commonality. Instead of trying to isolate a locally rich concept by looking at a series of substantial features common among the local populist instances, I suggest that we can usefully compare approaches that focus on two types of analogies (with a syndrome and with a symptom) as well as on the functions that help explain the role of populism in post-1989 Romanian politics. The idea of populism that could emerge from this analysis might then help shed light on some otherwise ambiguous political phenomena.

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Defining Populism: Conundrums and Strategies

One important difficulty in approaching a general definition of populism lies in the expectations that we start with: that the concept should be able both to include a sufficient number of relevant cases *and* clearly differentiate that class from other political phenomena. Yet instances of populist politics are embedded in locally relevant contexts, which are historically unrelated, and the actors themselves usually resist such labeling, let alone claim some commonality with a political family that could provide support for a common ideological ground. From the late nineteenth century People's Party in the United States to Latin American waves of populism and recent Western European populism, from the "Tea Party" to the current populist reactions to the consequences of the perceived loss of sovereignty in Southern Europe, or the varieties of Central and East European populisms of the last two decades, the connecting threads seem to be very remote.

For sure, each of the examples mentioned are thoroughly studied and, in this sense, locally rich concepts of populism emerge in the literature.¹ There is, indeed, a large corpus of studies on each of these local and historical variations of populism, but the substantial features of such local concepts are not replicated in a general concept of populism. Each time we might attempt to extract a general concept of populism that is capable both of comprising all cases and distinguishing them from other forms of modern politics, we quickly find that almost no substantial features are common across all the cases. Giovanni Sartori described this problem as conceptual stretching:² this happens whenever "our gains in extensional coverage tend to be matched by losses in connotative precision. It appears that we can cover more—in traveling terms—only by saying less, and by saying less in a far less precise manner."³ The difficulties mentioned by

¹ D. Albertazzi and D. McDonnell, *Twenty-First Century Populism: The Spectre of Western European Democracy*, 1st ed. (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008); M.L. Conniff, *Populism in Latin America* (Tuscaloosa: University Alabama Press, 1999); J. Hayward, *Élitism, Populism, and European Politics* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996); K. Abts and S. Rummens, "Populism Versus Democracy," *Political Studies* 55, 2 (June 2007): 405–424; A. Todorov, "National Populism Versus Democracy," *Critique and Humanism* 23, 1 (2007): 81–95; P. Taggart, "Populism and Representative Politics in Contemporary Europe," *Journal of Political Ideologies* 9, 3 (October 2004): 269–288.

² G. Sartori, "Concept Misformation in Comparative Politics," *The American Political Science Review* 64, 4 (1970): 1033–1053.

³ Sartori, "Concept Misformation in Comparative Politics," 1035.

Sartori, of extending the use of western concepts of democracy elsewhere, are faced also by other concepts, e.g., of populism, defined in a particular context and transferred to other contexts.⁴ For this reason the many definitions of populism⁵ are still wildly different. Scholars disagree even about what makes populism a consistent political object. While some authors keep referring to populism as a political ideology, for others it is simply rhetoric and style; for some, a type of political mobilization, yet for others, a political pathology.

Various authors attempt to articulate a general definition of populism by adopting one of the two most common strategies, with equally insufficient results. The first one consists in starting from a locally rich conceptual elaboration and then attempting to build a canonical definition. But as much as such a substantive concept is locally relevant, it becomes inoperative when applied to other contexts. Most other populist phenomena do not fit the initial reference, and the resulting concept can only be used if accompanied by a long list of exceptions.⁶ This means that only the second role of the definition is satisfied (substantial identity) but not the first (inclusion of the relevant cases). That is because populist families fail to share a consistent set of values, ideological positions, and policy options.⁷ Many cleavages, from rural and urban, to radical and conservative, are variously addressed by the diverse movements, leading observers to conclude that any general definition of populism that includes substantial features can only describe a limited number of phenomena, and any extension of its use entails a serious argument concerning the exceptions.

A second strategy for obtaining a general concept of populism involves the effort to enumerate most locally relevant instances of populism and then to extract a common conceptual core. As we shall see below, the result of this approach is a minimal core that is, precisely, much too minimalist. The

⁴ D. Collier and J. E. Mahon, "Conceptual 'Stretching' Revisited: Adapting Categories in Comparative Analysis," *The American Political Science Review* 87, 4 (December 1993), 845.

⁵ G. Ionescu and E. Gellner, *Populism: Its Meaning and National Characteristics* (New York: Macmillan, 1969); Y. Mény and Y. Surel, eds., *Democracies and the Populist Challenge* (New York: Palgrave, 2002); F. Panizza (ed.), *Populism and the Mirror of Democracy* (London: Verso, 2005).

⁶ E. Laclau, *On Populist Reason* (London: Verso, 2005), 117: "All the attempts at finding what is idiosyncratic in populism in elements such as a peasant or small-ownership constituency, or resistance to economic modernization, or manipulation by marginalized elites are, as we have seen, essentially flawed: they will always be overwhelmed by an avalanche of exceptions."

⁷ Ionescu and Gellner, *Populism*.

only common elements that are left at the end are a sharp *polarization* between people and elites and a brutal *simplification* of the social and political space. The “ladder of abstraction,” as defined by Sartori, means the effort “to broaden the extension of a concept by diminishing its attributes or properties, i.e., by reducing its connotation.” Yet in some cases, “*the denotation is extended by obfuscating the connotation*. As a result we do not obtain a more general concept but its counterfeit, a mere generality.”⁸

Thus, when applying Sartori’s “ladder of abstraction” to the different local elaborations and historical variations of populism, we obtain a core conceptual content that is composed of a sharp polarization between people and elites and a brutal simplification of the social and political space. The polarization itself is at play whenever “the people” or a “heartland” (in the terminology of Paul Taggart)⁹ is opposed to a corrupt, degenerated elite. As some authors observe, populism is made possible by the very plural meanings of the notion of “the people”;¹⁰ populism plays precisely on these ambiguities and singles out a particular identity that somehow concentrates the complex plurality of the possible meanings, to the exclusion of other identities and especially of the “elites” that fail to represent, and thus betray, “the people” thus articulated. For this reason, the polarization coincides with an exclusionary identification of illegitimate (foreign, parasitic, idle, cosmopolitan) groups that are better represented by the corrupt elites.

Populism operates a double simplification: one that considers people’s will as self-evident, constricting therefore the mechanisms of political representation, and one that concentrates single-mindedly on a particular identity as conveying that substantial unity. Policy-wise, the simplification is at work whenever populist actors promise, in a characteristic example, to “end corruption in 90 days.”

If reduced to the minimal core, however, populism is not discernible from politics in general. As Ernesto Laclau observes,¹¹ all political mobilizations entail some sort of discursive construction of a “people” as an agent of political change, and also inevitably simplify the complexities and ambiguities of democratic politics. In other words, a concept of populism that consists *only* of the minimal core is itself inoperable, since if

⁸ Sartori, “Concept Misformation in Comparative Politics,” 1041.

⁹ P. Taggart, *Populism* (Buckingham: Open University Press, 2000).

¹⁰ Margaret Canovan, *The People* (Cambridge, MA: Polity, 2005); M. Canovan, “Trust the People! Populism and the Two Faces of Democracy,” *Political Studies* 47, 1 (1999): 2–16.

¹¹ Laclau, *On Populist Reason*, 18: “[...] is not this logic of simplification, and of making some terms imprecise, the very condition of political action?”

reduced to this meaning, “populism” simply collapses into “politics.” It becomes easily a core of *generalities* instead of a conceptual core capable of enabling and sustaining subsequent *generalizations*. Furthermore, a general concept reduced to its minimal core is fundamentally indeterminate, with important consequences on the ideological substance of populism. Many authors therefore simply avoid the search for a general concept of populism and focus only on the thick local concepts (e.g. recent Western European populism).

In the following sections I will look into two strategies for delineating such thick local concepts in Romanian populism of the past two decades. They do not offer a comprehensive account of its ideological content or a list of necessary features, but rather point to possible analogies through which one can grasp what populism represents in this context. One is the dominant approach to Romanian (and, for that matter, Eastern European) populism, and treats it as a *pathology* inherent to democratic transitions, a position grounded on a sharp and often normatively laden distinction between reasonable forms of democracy and its degeneration. A second strategy treats populism rather as a *symptom*, that is, a marker for other democratic difficulties and complexity; my own approach builds on this second version, and consists in treating populism in Romania as a proxy, or a substitute, for radical politics within democracy.

The Populist Syndrome

One particular research alternative consists in actually reversing the definition, by predicating the concept of populism upon another, well established, concept. A prevalent choice is thus to see populism as a pathology of democracy.¹² Definitions of populism thus often adopt a medical terminology, and its main features are identified with a disorder, a disease of democracy. This medical vocabulary allows, at the same time, the conveyance of analogies or metaphors that express common intuitions.

When understood as a syndrome, populism *is* the illness.¹³ It's seen as the very corruption of the proper mechanisms and institutions of democ-

¹² T. Akkerman, “Populism and Democracy: Challenge or Pathology?,” *Acta Politica* 38, 2 (June 2003): 147–159.

¹³ P. A. Taguieff, “Political Science Confronts Populism: From a Conceptual Mirage to a Real Problem,” *Telos* 103 (1995): 9–43. P.-A. Taguieff, *L'illusion populiste: de l'archaïque au médiatique* (Paris: Flammarion, 2007).

racy, whether we speak of political representation, participation, deliberation, or protection of constitutional liberties. The fragile equilibrium that contemporary democracies depend upon is said to be upset by the violent simplifications and polarizations operated by populist movements, and ultimately the survival of democracy as a regime is at stake. Chronic or acute, the disease that populism represents ought to be contained or cured. The “virus” of populism can thus contaminate consolidated as well as fledgling democracies, and a degeneration of their health might ensue.

This view assumes a rather binary normative distinction between democracy and populism. William Riker, for instance, worked out such an opposition¹⁴ between a liberal understanding of democracy, traced back to Madison, and a populist version, traced back to Rousseau. His normative conclusion is that populist democracy results in incoherent results, and is to be avoided. Other authors work out a sharp distinction between a proper, normal mode of democracy and a populist, delusive attempt to realize “people’s will” without regard to reason. As a potentially sinister revolt against the procedural limits championed by a liberal, or Madisonian, tradition in democratic thinking, populism draws contemporary politics towards an unbridled flattering of public opinion, allows for unscrupulous politicians, and can always revive the worst derailment of mass politics and the tyranny of the majority.

In post-communist societies, populism, often associated with nationalism, has the potential to produce powerful myths that can take whole societies hostage and become parasitic to modernization itself. Speaking of a “Belgrade syndrome” of populism,¹⁵ Vladimir Tismaneanu points to its chauvinistic and authoritarian nature. He is inclined to describe the post-communist political and ideological landscape as a struggle between “romantic-populist forces,” characterized by anti-capitalism, anti-Westernism, antisemitism, and “the partisans of Westernisation and liberal modernity.”¹⁶ Because of its potential to produce radical political alternatives in Central and Eastern Europe, a “neopopulist syndrome” is a significant threat to the consolidation of liberal-procedural democracy: “Dogmatically oracular, the ethnocentric populist discourse favors anti-procedural practices, emasculation of parliamentary power, and contempt

¹⁴ W. H. Riker, *Liberalism Against Populism: A Confrontation Between the Theory of Democracy and the Theory of Social Choice* (San Francisco: W.H. Freeman, 1982).

¹⁵ V. Tismaneanu, *Fantasies of Salvation: Democracy, Nationalism, and Myth in Post-communist Europe* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2009).

¹⁶ Tismaneanu, *Fantasies*, 34.

for clearly delineated party ideologies. In fact, this postcommunist and postfascist populism is simultaneously pre- and postmodern, a collection of emotions and anxieties claiming to save society from an otherwise inevitable decay.”¹⁷

As a democratic ailment, not only is populism seen as parasitic to democracy, but the definition itself becomes an addendum to the definitions of democracy.¹⁸ In this sense, there is a certain advantage in that the concepts of populism and democracy become intertwined, and their definitions complete each other. What the notion of populism lacks in terms of features that add towards a fuller concept can, thus, be obtained by reference to (and as a negation of) the corresponding dimensions of democracy.

Populism is defined through its impatience with, or misconception of, the various institutional mechanisms and institutional procedures that, on the one hand, coagulate and filter the people's will and, on the other hand, allow the representatives to address the complexity of contemporary politics. In this last respect, a common denominator of populist positions is the assertion that politics is actually not complex, and that the limits that decision-makers encounter in carrying out the people's will are simply due to corruption or incompetence. The populist promise is thus one of a rapid and massive simplification of the public agenda, a radical reduction of institutions, procedures, and horizontal interdependencies as a condition to the truthful implementation of the people's self-evident will. Complexity is depicted as the misleading result of ominous conspiracies aiming to exclude and spoil, whereas a strong leader would be able to read and simply carry out the people's will.

It is, in fact, a common denominator of Romanian opposition populists—from the nineties to today—to claim that easy solutions to the most intricate social and economic problems would be readily available if only allowed by the political establishment. On top of this rapid-solutions agenda is corruption, inflation, public sector reforms, and even constitutional design.

One recent example is that of Dan Diaconescu, a TV showman and the former populist leader of the “Dan Diaconescu People's Party,” who decided to try to buy “on behalf of the people” Oltechim, a massive bankrupt chemical plant. His action was announced throughout the shows on his

¹⁷ V. Tismaneanu, “Hypotheses on Populism: the Politics of Charismatic Protest,” *East European Politics & Societies* 15, 1 (2000), 17.

¹⁸ N. Urbinati, “Democracy and populism,” *Constellations* 5, 1 (2003): 110–124.

TV channels, and when he failed to actually transfer the funds according to the privatization procedure, thereby nullifying the sale, he declared himself a political victim and sued the government for \$2 billion in compensation, again for the benefit of the people. He offered, the same day, to reclaim for the people other major, but failing, public businesses, such as the national airline and the railway companies. Such moves are part of a larger political and media campaign in which he proclaims defending the people against a set of cross-party plutocrats. With significant support in most recent polls, he was in a position of political arbiter after the elections of December 9, 2012.

Diaconescu is only the most recent populist actor in Romanian politics, part of a series that included Corneliu Vadim Tudor and George Becali. The best known populist movement in the nineties was the Greater Romania Party, which concentrated, under the leadership of Vadim Tudor, a radical critique of corruption (adopted later by the candidate and then president, Traian Basescu) and an even stronger identitarian dimension (shared, in a lower key, by most other parties). This movement attempted to reduce “the people” to a substantive, ethnic identity (“plagued” by illegitimate privileges of the Hungarian, Roma minorities, or by foreigners in general) and present aggressive solutions to corruption. This xenophobic discourse was also a continuous attack on the elites, deemed too corrupt or incompetent to preserve the national (i.e. Romanian ethnic) identity and the common properties of the ethnically defined people. That property was supposed to include everything, and any privatizations or restitutions of properties confiscated during the communist regime would amount to treason. Hence, the Greater Romania Party, besides the occasional overtly irredentist and anti-Semitic message, was mainly interested in polarizing the political spectrum by reducing the people to a substantive ethnic identity, and to brutally simplify the potential solutions by calling for an authoritarian, repressive state. George Becali, leader of the New Generation Party (*Partidul Noua Generație-Creștin Democrat*, PNG-CD), had a similarly irregular electoral success and promoted a virulent and personalized discourse, yet his main attraction was a certain *largesse* as a businessman in politics.

Diaconescu had a different approach, in that he went further than rhetoric. By actually taking part in a bid to buy the chemical plant in the name of the people, he crossed an implicit Rubicon of Romanian politics. That is, he dismantled the assumption that the supposedly marginal populist leaders are, other things being equal, interested most in reaping the benefits and immunities of parliamentary seats, but not in actually making decisions that affect the electorate. For this reason, Diaconescu came to be

perceived as a new breed of populist, one that further endangers the health of the democracy in Romania. His political propositions are in truth aimed against the limits of the politically *reasonable*: among other items, his party's electoral platform—and manifesto for a “purple revolution”—includes establishing a national trust for administering public sector companies, called “The People's Wealth,” with a popularly elected manager; eliminating the elected politicians' salaries; eliminating public financing of political parties; setting up a popular tribunal to judge the current officials; and, most importantly, the distribution of 20,000 euros to each citizen, the elimination of all taxes, and a one-year suspension of any personal debt payments to crediting banks.¹⁹

Such simplifications are worrying from a liberal perspective on democracy. And here is, in fact, the main thrust of the approach that assimilates populism to a democratic pathology: the simplified politics proposed by populists is viewed as a dangerous caricature of the liberal or deliberative models of democracy. Describing populism in this normatively antithetic position to democracy also allows the theorists to convey a sense of moral condemnation that relegates certain actors and movements to a political underclass.

Another sharp distinction mobilized by the “populist syndrome” approach is the one between established ideologies and the unstructured, unstable value content of populism. Vladimir Tismaneanu, for instance, calls populism an “ersatz ideology” that profits from the “ideological vacuum left by the collapse of state socialism.”²⁰ As a consistent doctrinal identity of populist movements remains elusive, the dichotomy that becomes relevant is that between the classical political ideologies and what certain authors called, in an adaptation of Michael Freeden's work²¹ on political ideologies and nationalism, the “thin-centered ideology” of populism.²² Indeed, this perspective allows us to analyze a multiplicity of populist iterations, without being blocked by the obvious absence of a significant set of core ideological positions. The flexibility of value-commitments and ideological references within populist discourses are their hallmark feature, and permit such leaders to seize various political opportunities without much restriction.

¹⁹ <http://partidul.poporului.ro/content/20-de-puncte-ale-partidului-poporului>, accessed September 1, 2012.

²⁰ Tismaneanu, *Fantasies*, 53.

²¹ M. Freeden, “Is Nationalism a Distinct Ideology?” *Political Studies* 46, 4 (2002): 748–765.

²² C. Mudde, “The Populist Zeitgeist,” *Government and Opposition* 39, 4 (2004): 542–563.

Yet the approach consisting of treating populism as a pathology has its own limits. In effect, it fails to provide a stand-alone general definition of populism; characterizations of the meaning of populism remain dependent on, or complementary to, those of the primary object of inquiry (that of which populism is a pathology).²³ Furthermore, a pathology presupposes a “normal mode” of democracies, to which populism is a degeneration.²⁴ Such a standard of normality is however often a matter of analytical debate and normative pluralism. Since populism is by no means an Eastern European affair, the larger question pertaining to the nature and transformations of contemporary democracies is a necessary backdrop to any meaningful discussion of its local concepts.

Finally, this strategy is liable to result in the same indeterminacy as the minimal-core strategy: it allows, in effect, for a concept that becomes a shortcut for any generic democratic trouble. It is difficult to escape the temptation to address populism in post-communist Romania precisely as a generic critique of its democratic *faux-pas*. In this sense, a certain inflationary use is possible whenever we describe atypical political phenomena or unusual political mobilizations as populist: whatever does not fit a default view of democracy would be relegated, in a problematic move, to the populism box.

Populism as Symptom

When understood as a symptom, populism is not the syndrome (pathology) itself, but an indicator of an already existing, independent “condition” of democracy. That ailment may be related, for instance, to the role of the parties, to the larger problem of political agency or the failure of classical ideologies to mobilize and coordinate mass politics, or as a reaction against the limits of representative politics in general. These deeper, core difficulties of contemporary democracies grant a place to the populist reactions. The advantage of this approach is that it does not necessarily presuppose a sharp normative distinction between populism and democracy. Also, it provides a wider characterization, with mainstream, not only fringe, parties also incorporating a substantial dose of populism.

Populism is, in this sense, a rather neutral mark of a long-term transformation of contemporary politics, with a corresponding mutation in the

²³ Abts and Rummens, “Populism Versus Democracy.”

²⁴ C. Mouffe, *The Return of the Political* (London: Verso, 1993).

categories of political analysis. Alina Mungiu-Pippidi lists²⁵ populist electoral gains in post-EU accession Romanian and East-Central European politics as a symptom that should shed light on the nature of a possible democratic malaise or syndrome in these countries. Therefore, she suggests that such populist advances are more telling about the crisis of the political class than about the populist leaders themselves and their putative or real voters. Questions pertaining to the quality of governance, corruption, and the weak rule of law are the underlying causes of the democratic malaise, for which populist reactions are, as it turns out, rather symptoms. Central and East European voters:

seem fed up with the behavior of the improvised political class that has governed the region since 1990, a class which in some countries has shown a remarkably low capacity for political learning. Either this political class will reform itself so as to become more accountable, or else voters are bound to turn to new alternatives. And these will frequently be populists of some stripe who capitalize precisely on this accountability deficit and who claim that they can offer a different brand of politics and politicians.²⁶

From this perspective, more serious democratic problems are related to the failures of governance and the unaccountable elites. The higher risks are not the tyranny of the majority, the crowds manipulated by eerie demagogues, but rather the tyranny of a narrow, unaccountable, self-reproducing and under-performing political class. In the end, the argument boils down to the classical critique of elite and oligarchization of modern politics, a topos of the early twentieth century.

Populism can, indeed, be interpreted in the Romanian case as a reaction to the continuous controversies pertaining to the shortcomings of political representation. Democratic representation has always been a conceptually complex undertaking,²⁷ yet in recent times an already shrinking number of accepted formulae lost even further support.²⁸ Romanian politics has been characterized during the last two decades by a succession of blockages, most of them dealing with the form and substance of political representation. Such blockages evolved into full-blown constitutional crises several times, and each such episode has contributed to a further

²⁵ A. Mungiu-Pippidi, "EU Accession Is No 'End of History'," *Journal of Democracy* 18, 4 (2007): 8–16.

²⁶ *Ibidem*, 12.

²⁷ H. F. Pitkin, *The Concept of Representation*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1972).

²⁸ P. Taggart, "Populism and Representative Politics in Contemporary Europe," *Journal of Political Ideologies* 9, 3 (2004): 269–288.

weakening of the shared understanding of the meaning and range of democratic representation. We can identify most populist eruptions of the last decade as a clear sign that particular dysfunctional arrangements within the Romanian constitutional system and political environment are profoundly damaging.

For more than a decade, governing coalitions in the Romanian parliament have not been produced through elections, but rather as a consequence of what might be called a presidential moment of the Romanian political regime. Since the constitution specifies that the president nominates a prime minister from the party that wins 50%+1 of the mandates, and no party has ever been able to obtain such a percentage after 1992, the crucial moment of the elections in fact allows the president a large dose of political discretion in nominating a person that should be able, then, to obtain a functional parliamentary majority. As the coalitions are usually highly flexible,²⁹ the decisiveness of these electoral moments is affected, thereby amplifying the impatience with parliamentary politics. The current Romanian political system tends to encourage the formation of government coalitions under the supervision of the president—coalitions that are destined to bring together ideologically unrelated parties, united only by the chance to share access to state resources. As a Romanian variety of cartel parties, these parties are primarily focused on integrating the structures of the state and are highly dependent on public resources, acting as a broker between state and society, and redefining their membership policies as influenced by the party's acting as an interface to public resources.³⁰

The president's own constitutional role, however, is fraught with inconsistencies. On the one hand, he or she is elected through direct univer-

²⁹ Since 1992, the Romanian governments were coalition governments, or minority governments supported by a parliamentary coalition. For each such coalition, the ideological frontiers were rarely apparent: socialists were allied with xenophobic populists, with the Hungarian party, with the liberals, and with the center-right popular party. Similarly, the liberals and the conservatives were joined by socialists and by fringe populist parties.

³⁰ R. S. Katz and P. Mair, "Changing Models of Party Organization and Party Democracy: The Emergence of the Cartel Party," *Party Politics* 1, 1 (January 1995): 5–28; R. S. Katz and P. Mair, "Cadre, Catch-All or Cartel?," *Party Politics* 2, 4 (1996): 525–534; R. S. Katz and P. Mair, "The Ascendancy of the Party in Public Office: Party Organizational Change in Twentieth-Century Democracies," in *Political Parties: Old Concepts and New Challenges*, ed. R. Gunther, R. J.R. Montero, J.J. Linz (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 113–135. For a very clear description of the Romanian political regime and party system, see C. Preda and S. Soare, *Regimul, partidele și sistemul politic din România* (București: Nemira, 2008).

sal vote, yet beyond such significant presidential moments as described above, the regime falls back into a rather parliamentary mode. While he cannot dissolve the parliament and has very limited instruments in a political *cohabitation* with an antagonistic prime minister, the parliamentary majority can set up an impeachment process that allows it to provoke new presidential elections. The pivotal point of the recall mechanism is a popular referendum. Both in 2007 and in 2012, these procedures were initiated in parliament, but ended in failure.

Failed referendums are another strong underlying reason for the resurgence of populist politics in Romania. The last valid and decisive referendum was organized in 2003 for a rather minor revision of the constitution and, because of the lack of participation, it was continued, *ad hoc*, into a second day. Since then, three referendums were organized, two of which were either not valid (for failing a constitutional threshold of participation, as in 2012), or not decisive (in 2009, as the parliament refused to enact the constitutional reform that constituted the object of the public consultation). A referendum called in 2007 was valid, yet its effectiveness consisted in preserving the *status quo* of a political stalemate.

The fact that both elections and referendums are less decisive than expected produces a crisis of representation that feeds populist reactions and reinforces the impatience with other, legitimate, procedural filters. Moreover, failed referendums risk exacerbating an acute political crisis, raising it to the level of a regime legitimacy crisis. As the recent political crisis of 2012 showed, the climactic point of a referendum that should have been the *denouement* of the political stand-off morphed into a prolonged political warfare that dragged into an extremely profound crisis affecting the most fundamental democratic institutions and the commitment to the rule of law.

In such a context, older anti-party³¹ positions resurface with significant support. In 2009, a referendum scheduled on the day of the presidential elections was allowing public antipathy for the parliament and political parties to be transformed into a constitutional amendment that would eliminate one of its chambers and decrease the number of MPs to 300 (from 470). Traian Basescu used, during several years, a strongly anti-parliamentarian and anti-party rhetoric that corresponded to a number of constitutional and electoral projects that would have massively limited the number of parties and that promised to “make parliament efficient.” “Effi-

³¹ N. L. Rosenblum, *On the Side of the Angels: An Appreciation of Parties and Partisanship* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2008).

ciency” was here a catchall word meant to include the financial costs of a functioning parliament as well as the quantity and quality of its legislative output. Coupled with this was also an anti-corruption discourse aimed, especially during the electoral campaigns, at the financial sponsors of the competing political parties. Yet this concern with the financial and political power of “moguls” failed in the end to materialize in a significant campaign finance reform project.

As a symptom of a crisis of political representation, populist anti-partyism has been a constant theme of the National Salvation Front (the FSN) of December 1989, as well of its various political avatars. In their narrative, as heirs of a revolutionary “Front”³² unifying the nation against the Ceausescus and their personal dictatorship, the early attempts to set up alternative political parties (by the historical, pre-WWII liberal, peasant, social-democratic parties) were deemed to be just illegitimate fragmentation and partisan bickering. They formulated a sharp polarization between a unified people, governed by technocrats orbiting around the integrative party, on the one hand, and divisive parties that were simply engaging in political brinkmanship and the “scourge” involved in public protests (“*golan*”). The simplification was precisely the promised dissolution of politics into administration, and the dismissal of any competing political argument as irresponsible politicking. Ion Iliescu’s famous obsession for consensus³³ was itself at the apex of this typical populist move in that consensus is only possible under the rule of technocrats orbiting around one party, and is occasionally imposed by the miners by force. Mobilizing parts of the industrial legacy of communism against the recalcitrant political adversaries was itself part of this rhetoric of consensus and silencing the opposition, as the miners,³⁴ part of the industrial “heartland,” were just requesting silent (i.e. non-partisan) administrative efficacy.

Relevant here is precisely the contrast between the public’s perception of bureaucrats versus technocrats.³⁵ In an interesting dissociation of the

³² J. Mark, *The Unfinished Revolution: Making Sense of the Communist Past in Central-Eastern Europe* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2011).

³³ P. Siani-Davies, *The Romanian Revolution of December 1989* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2005).

³⁴ The miners from coal-extraction mines around Valea Jiului acted as a paramilitary force of Iliescu’s party in a series of violent interventions in Bucharest in 1990, 1991, and again in 1999. These “mineriads” were explicitly undertaken in order to “normalize”, “silence”, and “clean” the streets of the capital from its partisan politics.

³⁵ E. Etzioni-Halevy, *Bureaucracy & Democracy: A Political Dilemma* (London: Routledge & K. Paul, 1985).

use of these notions, the prevailing understanding assimilates bureaucrats to degenerated technocrats: inefficient, incompetent, and corrupt, while the technocrats that should govern (*in lieu* of politicians and bureaucrats) are essentially seen as competent, impartial, non-partisan, and in possession of the mythical knowledge for making society efficient and productive. The incorporeal technocrats are then supposed to be either the recently emigrated or a hidden reservoir of administrative and managerial competence. Part of a constant populist attitude is thus the hope that politics can ultimately be overcome and replaced with administration and management.³⁶

Most major political actors after 1989 shared a fascination with the promise of technocracy. At the same time, the rhetoric of technocracy worked as a code for closing down critical and political debate. Reforms in the public sector (education, health, public services) are supposed to simply follow an indisputable canon of management (offered by the EU, the IMF, the World Bank, etc.) and be immune to public debate; frequent regulatory upheavals are delivered not only as non-negotiable measures, but also as exempt from the usual mechanisms of political accountability. Politics as a process of negotiation and public deliberation among competing claims is often understood as a corruption of a “correct” mode of politics in which people simply acquiesce to administrative concentration and economic management.

When understood as a symptom, populism in Romania may also be seen in a regulative role, as an approximation and domestication of radicalism. What radical politics does is fundamentally challenge the accepted limits of possibility in politics. From this perspective, populism acts as a substitute for more radical forms of challenging the unaccountability and ineffectiveness that mar the democratic processes. As a proxy for radical politics, it operates as a regulatory agent, in as much as it frames dissent and disrupts the established boundaries of political normalcy maintained by the established political parties. It is part of a politics that undertakes to restore the “redemptive face of politics,”³⁷ the democratic promise of reinstating the self-governing autonomy of the people.

Local flavors of populism have been, from the beginning, characteristic both of mainstream parliamentary parties and of the fringes of democ-

³⁶ Rosenblum, *On the Side of the Angels*; P. Rosanvallon, *Counter-Democracy. Politics in an Age of Distrust* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008); Ch. Mouffe, *The Return of the Political* (London: Verso, 2005).

³⁷ Canovan, “Trust the People! Populism and the Two Faces of Democracy.”

ratic politics. Due to their shallow and erratic adherence to political ideologies, most Romanian political parties devolved, without difficulty, their political identity towards a strong populist mode. A constant type of populism since the early 1990s is a notable combination of hopes of technocratic governance and the eternal return of anti-corruption crusades.

Populism contributes to the regulation of dissent precisely by its embrace of the technocratic promise. With this, a fundamental process of de-politicization is at work, which neutralizes³⁸ to a large degree the more radical attempts at alternative political configurations. Either of the Right or of the Left, the populist technocratic reference aims to delegitimize political dissensus and at the same time produces the normative ideal of a (yet to be realized) redemptive technocratic administration. The disruptive face of populism, on the other hand, consists in the flamboyant challenges to the established limits of political possibilities. By radically attacking the core elements of mainstream politics, populist discourses rearrange the political coordinates of the acceptable and of the possible, thereby opening, albeit temporarily, new avenues for political mobilization.

The transformations undergone by populism in post-communist Romania provide clues not only for the impatience with the limits of political representation, but also for the political system's capacity to regulate potentially radical alternatives after 1989. When seen as a symptom rather than as the pathology itself, the partial conceptualizations of populism are in effect more helpful in shedding light on the deeper conundrums and blockages of post-communist Romanian politics.

³⁸ E. Laclau and Ch. Mouffe, *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy: Towards a Radical Democratic Politics* (London: Verso, 2001).

The Illusion Of Inclusion

Configurations Of Populism In Hungary

ANDRÁS BOZÓKI

Introduction

Populism, which was once a feature of the Hungarian *népi* (ethnopolulist or populist) writers' movement and preserved in cultural tradition throughout the twentieth century, has appeared in different waves in the last decades. Populist ideas and policies never had the chance to provide a political alternative in a totalitarian and authoritarian dictatorship. At the end of the 1980s and the beginning of the 1990s, the fate of these political ideas was not clear. Moreover, its form—whether a political idea, a political style, or a political practice suitable for every purpose—was not clear either. Recently, populism re-appeared in a form of a nationalist “package” of neoliberal economic policies.¹

With regard to its nature, populism has induced many radical ideas. Some thought it to be the ideological cover of fascism or the radical Right, others believed it to be a statist economic policy that could appear not only on the right but on the anti-liberal Left as well, which was defending its position. Others thought that populism is a rather harmless phenomenon, because democracy cannot exist without some elements of populism in it; therefore populism is simply a demagogic way of speaking, a political style. Judging populism proved to be as controversial as the attempts at describing it, not only for those in politics but for observers as well.²

¹ Cf. N. Davidson, “Nationalism and Neoliberalism,” *Variant* 32 (Summer 2008): 46–54; J. Becker, “Nationalist Neo-liberalism: On the eve of Hungary's European Presidency,” *World Economy and Development In Brief*, December 30, 2010; A. Harmes, “The Rise of Neoliberal Nationalism,” *Review of International Political Economy*, 19, 1 (2012): 59–86.

² Among the most important works on populism I mention the following ones: E. Shils, *The Torment of Secrecy* (London: W. Heinemann, 1956); A. Walicki, “To Define Populism,” *Government and Opposition* 3, 2 (1968): 138–72; G. Ionescu and E. Gellner, eds., *Populism, Its Meanings and National Characteristics* (London: Weidenfeld

According to the class theory approach, populism is an expression of the interests of one or more classes (farmers, urban settlers, intellectuals, informal proletariat) depending on the social and historical context. Others regard populism as a flexible, opportunistic, anti-ideological concept: much more of a syndrome than a doctrine.³ Many scholars insist that populism is an ideology which comprises some typical elements, for instance: “hostility to the status quo, mistrust of traditional politicians, appeal to the people and not to classes, and anti-intellectualism.”⁴ Recently, populism was defined as “an ideology which pits a virtuous and homogeneous people, against a set of elites and dangerous others.”⁵ Some say populism is not an independent ideology but a variant of socialism, while others claim that populism can also be an expression of nationalism,⁶ the radical Right,⁷ or even neo-liberalism.⁸

Others follow a functionalist explanation by suggesting that populism is a premature incorporation of the masses into political life at times when political structures are unable to institutionalize participation.⁹ The weakness of the structures of representation, the lack of autonomous workers’ organizations, and the rising expectations of the masses create a particular

and Nicholson, 1969); L. Goodwyn, *The Populist Moment: A Short History of the Agrarian Revolt in America* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1978); M. Canovan, *Populism* (New York: Harcourt, Brace, Jovanovich, 1981); Michael L. Conniff, ed., *Latin American Populism in Comparative Perspective* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1982); T. Di Tella, *Latin American Politics: A Theoretical Framework* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1990); P. Taggart, *Populism* (Buckingham: Open University Press, 2000); F. Panizza, ed., *Populism and the Mirror of Democracy* (London: Verso, 2005); C. Mudde, *The Populist Radical Right Parties in Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007); D. Albertazzi and D. McDonnell, eds., *Twenty-First Century Populism: The Spectre of Western European Democracy* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2008).

³ P. Wiles, “A Syndrome Not a Doctrine” in Ionescu and Gellner, *Populism*, 166.

⁴ E. Laclau, *Politics and Ideology in Marxist Theory* (London: Verso, 1977), 147.

⁵ Daniele Albertazzi and Duncan McDonnell, “Introduction: The Sceptre and the Spectre” in *Twenty-First Century Populism*, 3.

⁶ A. Wimmer, *Nationalist Exclusion and Ethnic Conflict: Shadows of Modernity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002).

⁷ C. Mudde, *The Ideology of the Extreme Right* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2000).

⁸ C. Butterwege, “Traditioneller Rechtsextremismus im Osten, modernisierten Rechtsextremismus im Westen: Ideologische Ausdifferenzierung durch neoliberale Globalisierung” *Osteuropa* 52, 7 (2002): 914–20.

⁹ G. Germani, *Authoritarianism, Fascism, and National Populism* (New Brunswick: Transaction Books, 1978).

social context favorable for populism.¹⁰ Students of democracy may also use populism as indicator in distinguishing between liberal and illiberal democracies.¹¹

Finally, populism can be analyzed within the framework of discourse analysis. Here, in the populist discourse politicians express the supposedly uniform interests of the people as an ultimate reference. Good and evil, workers and oligarchs, producers and parasites are presented as polar opposites in this political discourse, in which elites, migrants, and other minorities do not “truly belong” to the people. Therefore populism is not a singular phenomenon linked to a certain age and phase of development. It can accommodate itself in different social contexts and political regimes.

In this paper, my approach is based on Edward Shils’ classic and comprehensive definition of populism. This approach can be interpreted as the forerunner of the discourse analytic school of thought that gained prominence in research on populism as well. “According to populism the will of the people enjoys top priority in the face of any other principle, right, and institutional standard. Populists identify the people with justice and morality.”¹²

Generally populism promises a broad inclusion of the people to the political process. The following will demonstrate that populist attitudes and policies served just the opposite goal in the European semi-periphery. Populism has not only been applied flexibly to different, contradictory politics, but it is often used for exclusionary political purposes. I aim to establish a typology of Hungarian populism as 1.) the fusion of nationalism and socialism in the interwar period (1919–1945); 2.) cultural nationalism in the communist period (1948–1988); 3.) a form of discourse by intellectuals in politics during and after the transition (1987–1994); 4.) a form of anti-liberal discourse at the millennium (1998–2002); and 5.) a fusion of nationalism and neo-liberalism most recently (2010–2012). I will demonstrate that most of these forms of populism were presented rhetorically as new forms of political inclusion while they were mostly serving exclusionary policies. The many types and *long durée* dynamics

¹⁰ Di Tella, *Latin American Politics*.

¹¹ T. S. Pappas, “Populist Democracies,” paper presented at the European University Institute in Florence, May 23 2012; See also: M. Canovan, “Trust the People! Populism and the Two Faces of Democracy,” *Political Studies* 47, 1 (1999): 2–16; Y. Mény and Y. Surel, eds. *Democracies and the Populist Challenge* (New York: Palgrave, 2002); Alfio Mastropaolo, “Politics against Democracy: Party Withdrawal and Populist Break-through” in *Twenty-First Century Populism*, ed. Albertazzi and McDonnell, 30–48.

¹² Shils, *The Torment of Secrecy*, 97–99.

of Hungarian populism seem to be one of the permanent characteristics of policy-making in the last decades.

The Birth of Hungarian Capitalism and Its Social Discontents (1867–1914)

The development of Hungarian society was induced from above and resulted from external pressure. This transition was belated when compared to the modernization of the West. The defeated Hungarian Revolution of the mid-nineteenth century failed to reach national independence, and Hungary was at first part of the Habsburg Monarchy. After the 1867 Compromise with the Austrians, it became equal to Austria in the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy, witnessing rapid economic development before the Great War. The railway network of the country was developed and capital Budapest became a metropolis. Skilled Czech and German labor as well as emigrating Jewish traders played a significant role in this economic boom. An urban-bourgeois Hungary was in the making, its growing attraction in direct contrast to the backward rural peasantry. However, in the relationship between the gentry and the unfolding bourgeois, the former remained decisive; it was not the nobility that developed a bourgeois mentality, but the thinner bourgeois stratum was adjusting itself to the gentry.¹³ Assimilation to the Hungarians was synonymous with assimilation to the values and attitudes of the gentry middle class as an estate. Thus “embourgeoisement,” capitalist development, and modernity contrasted the “organically” developed character of Hungarians: those who expressed the values of Hungarians often confronted them with the bourgeois European values. The elements of the “homeland and progress” program, elaborated in the Reform Age in the first part of the nineteenth century, were fatally disposed to be turned against each other. The true “patriot” looked at the “Jewish” capitalism with suspicion, while the representatives of the growing capitalist class cared very little about the problem of national independence.

The Social Democratic Party of the age was just as much an urban phenomenon as the representation of the bourgeois political parties, hence it was unable to channel and handle the social tensions accumulating in the countryside. In the 1890s, strikes by the harvesters and movements of

¹³ F. Erdei (1943), “A magyar társadalom” in *Szárszó, 1943*, edited by István Pintér (Budapest: Magvető: 1984), 188–209.

the poor peasantry came in quick succession in the Plains. The agrarian movement of 1897–1898 involved tens of thousands that turned against the large estates as well as big capital and social democracy. The political rise of these strata of the underclass was equally suppressed by the politics of the gentry, the big estates, and liberalism. Thus, a broad-based authentic agrarian party could not develop in Hungary. What developed, however, represented the interests of landed smallholders only, and the party gradually lost some of its social sensitivity and hence much of its significance in its bargains with gentry politics. The poor peasantry turned to religious sects that were advocating anarchistic principles, and instead of making new attempts to express their political will they turned away from politics.¹⁴

The First World War meant an end to the hegemony of liberalism and conservatism all around Europe. New collectivist ideologies and movements (replacing the former ones in several cases) appeared: nationalism and socialism. The First World War and its tragic ending, which meant for Hungary the loss of two-thirds of its previous territory, deeply shocked the whole of society.

Populism as the Fusion of Nationalism and Socialism in the Horthy Era (1919–1944)

The first significant Hungarian populist ideologist, the writer Dezső Szabó (1879–1945), assessed the outbreak of the World War as the “failure of individualism.” According to him, liberalism committed the sin of neglecting the collective identity of society and the war was a punishment.¹⁵ Ideologists of liberalism were forced onto the defensive, at first against socialists and syndicalists, then against nationalists. Following the revolution of 1918, the social-liberal government could not dissolve the tensions caused by the war’s shocking defeat. Although it tried to pursue a radical policy in the social field, it proved too weak, and for a transitory period of four months power was shifted to the communists. After the fall of the communist dictatorship, in the autumn of 1919, a right-wing “Christian-national” restoration began to consolidate. The ruling circles blamed lib-

¹⁴ A. Bozóki and M. Sükösd, “Agrárszocializmus és ideális anarchizmus,” *Medvetánc* 7, 2 (1987): 293–319; For more details see A. Bozóki and M. Sükösd, eds., *Magyar anarchizmus* (Budapest: Balassi, 1998).

¹⁵ D. Szabó, “Az individualizmus csődje,” *Huszadik Század* 8 (1915): 81–94.

eralism for the war and for the temporary expansion of Bolshevism. Therefore, the moderate liberalism of the pre-1914 period could not return; the new regime could be characterized by a conservative, authoritarian, revanchist policy. In contrast to Peronism, the interwar Horthy-regime was unable and did not intend to involve the anti-liberal democratic forces. The politically articulated part of Hungarian society was split in two: besides the dominant “neo-baroque” national-historical society, there was a weaker bourgeois society, which had developed under the capitalist growth. Below them were the rural, uneducated peasant masses, left without political representation and equally despised by the politics of the gentry and the bourgeoisie.¹⁶

In the 1920s, the ideologists of the Hungarian *népi* (populist) movement realized that if they wanted to make a stronger impact they must unite national and the socialist radical movements. Their program was drawn up by Dezső Szabó in the early 1920s, in his series of articles entitled “Towards a New Hungarian Ideology.”¹⁷ In their opinion the two revolutions (the bourgeois one in 1918 and the Bolshevik one in 1919) failed because they were socially, but not nationally, radical. Also, the emancipatory movements against social oppression could renew themselves only if they were able to open to the nation, or more precisely to the people. This renewal must come from the suppressed strata, the peasantry, and the new Hungarian middle class should be created out of them (because the existing middle class was of alien origin). This new class, which would be committed to the people, would be the promoter of social transformation. To the *népi* movement, peasantry meant the people, and the people must be identical with the nation.

The *népi* movement was recruited from the company and followers of the populist writers,¹⁸ and although it had members of peasant origins, it remained largely a middle class group of intellectuals. The populist writers of the 1930s were the “Hungarian Narodniks” who, similar to their nineteenth century Russian predecessors, considered it their mission to mingle with “the people,” and to document the problems of rural Hungary: the decreasing population, the spread of religious sects, poverty, and the issue of land ownership. They hoped to achieve the reformation of

¹⁶ F. Erdei, “A magyar társadalom a két háború között,” in Gy. Kövér ed. *Magyarország társadalomtörténete* (Budapest: Akadémiai 1995): 30–40.

¹⁷ D. Szabó (1923), *Új magyar ideológia felé* (Budapest: Aurora 1923).

¹⁸ The most influential “*népi*” writers were Dezső Szabó, László Németh, Géza Féja and Gyula Illyés.

government politics by honestly exhibiting the real and cruel life of the peasants.¹⁹ Their intention proved to be illusionary, even though populist writers personally contacted members of the governing circles. Later on, some of them drifted towards the extreme political right, whereas others moved towards the extreme left (the illegal Communist Party). However, the core of writers' group remained together and founded the National Peasant Party in 1938. This party, however, never became an influential, mainstream party, and after 1945 it became a "fellow-traveler," a closely co-operating ally of the communists.

According to critics of this movement of writers in the 1930s, the initiative was not populist but *völkisch*, which paid service to anti-Semitism in the shadow of German Nazism.²⁰ The sympathizers of the *népi* movement, on the other hand, emphasized the plebeian, radical-democratic nature of the movement and stressed its social sensitivity.²¹ As this present paper does not aim to discuss the populist vs. urban disputes in detail,²² the following only dwells upon problems linked to the nature of populism.

The main issue concentrated around the unity or separation of political democracy and social reforms. Was social equality possible without democracy? Would the intentions of social reforms of an authoritarian system be acceptable? Those who were thinking in the dichotomy of democratic left and right refused to co-operate with representatives of the regime, saying that "neither popular self-government nor social progress can be imagined without personal freedom."²³ However, the system of coordinates for populism was not left and right, but rather up and down, and thus when searching for a vertical alliance of classes they were more inclined to compromise with the authoritarian power than were urban thinkers whom they considered doctrinaire.²⁴ *Népi* thinkers were convinced that the people must be lifted out from their suppressed state, and questions of

¹⁹ D. Némédi, *A népi szociográfia* (Budapest: Magvető, 1985).

²⁰ P. Ignóty, "Népiség és új humanizmus [1936]" in *Ignóty Pál, Jegyzetek a szabadságról*, ed. A. Bozóki (Budapest: Gondolat, 2010), 264–274; G. M. Tamás, "Ahogyan az ember forgószélben viselkedik," interviewed by Ágnes Széchenyi, *Valóság* 30, 10 (1992): 78–92.

²¹ G. Borbándi, *A magyar népi mozgalom* (New York: Püski, 1983); Gy. Gombos, "A harmadik út és a népi mozgalom," *Hitel*, February 1, 1989: 17–19; F. Gyurácz, "A populizmus értelmezéseiről," *Hitel* 4, 9 (1992): 32–43.

²² P. Sz. Nagy, ed., *A népi-urbánus vita dokumentumai, 1932–1947* (Budapest: Rakéta, 1990).

²³ P. Ignóty, "A demokrácia feladata," *Cobden*, November 1936.

²⁴ A. Bozóki, "Egy 'ingerlékeny' urbánus: Ignóty Pál és kora," *Századvég* 6–7 (1988): 244–264.

“dogmatism of the sides” were considered secondary. Although there are certain analyses that sharply separate left and right-wing populisms,²⁵ populism is primarily characterized by a denial of this dichotomy, and is a mixture of the elements of the left and right.

While the Hungarian movement of *népi* writers considered the solution of the peasant issue to be one of its most important tasks, its attitude towards the peasantry's *embourgeoisement* was rather ambivalent. Besides the need for social democratization, it wanted, rather romantically, to preserve certain traits of the peasant way of life. Moreover, it wanted to base a specific Hungarian democracy on rural way of life, considered “deeper” than the one dominant in Western Europe.²⁶ Putting emphasis on the national and social aspects laid the course for many of the representatives of the movement towards the extreme and racist right or towards the extreme communist left. Characteristically, in Eastern Europe, the populist movements received greater sympathy from proto-fascist and communist groups than liberals, social democrats, and ruling national conservatives. The latter expressed reservations towards such movements. For communists however, the appearance of the populist movements represented the possibility of a future alliance between the working class and the peasantry in the spirit of the revolutionary strategy and the policy of alliances of Lenin. The fascists regarded them as the natural continuation of the right-wing movements of agrarian societies, who turned against the aliens symbolizing a cosmopolitan life style and particularly against the Jews by an idealization of the peasantry.²⁷ The relationship of the Hungarian extreme right and the writers' movement is fittingly described by the following fact: the former criticized the popular writers' movement because, by emphasizing the issue of land reform and large estates, it diverted attention from the “Jewish question.” On the other hand, the majority of the populists, who did not interpret the social reforms in terms of protecting the races, felt that the extreme right was the one that diverted attention from the truly important issue: land reform.²⁸

During the interwar period in Hungary, no populist government policy could evolve. The government—with the exception of Gyula Gömbös's

²⁵ L. Percz, “A nép és az ő barátai: változatok a jobboldali populizmusra,” *Kritika*, January 1992: 13–16.

²⁶ P. Szalai, “A magyar radikalizmus helyzete 1945-1947 között a *Haladás* című hetilap tükrében,” manuscript, 1987.

²⁷ G. Ionescu, “Eastern Europe” in *Populism*, ed. Ionescu and Gellner, 117.

²⁸ I. Bibó, “Levél Borbándi Gyulához” in *Bibó István: Válogatott tanulmányok*, ed. T. Huszár and I. Vida (Budapest: Magvető, 1986), 307.

(1886–1936) premiership, between 1932–1936, when the interests of the lower middle class were represented verbally—was not inclined to channel the democratic demands coming from below. Extremist political forces attempted to articulate initiatives coming from below that were induced by growing social tensions and that were too radical to participate in the organization of a broad social coalition. The middle class was thin and weak: its majority supporting a national sentiment made a compromise with the Horthy-regime's bourgeois groups. Yet for reasons of their Jewish origins, the group was forced onto the defensive against the representatives of the regime, and their isolation made it impossible for them to form a broader social coalition.

The peasantry suffered from social exclusion, and for this reason it was unable to articulate its interests and enter into a political alliance. The *népi* writers attempted to close this social gap with their activities, but they themselves proved to be of limited influence: neither the political class of the Horthy-regime, nor the national middle class that entered into a compromise with the regime, nor the isolated bourgeois strata, and not even the targeted peasantry could have been mobilized by them. Thus the function of their writings remained primarily to keep social self-conscience alive.

Populism as Cultural Nationalism in the Communist Period 1948–1988)

The defeat suffered during the Second World War, the following brief spell of democracy, and the communist change of 1948 fundamentally transformed the structure of Hungarian society. The gentry elite was wiped out and a large part of the bourgeois middle class was destroyed by the war. In the 1940s many people from both strata migrated to the West. In the 1945 land reform, more than one million peasants were given land, which was subsequently forced onto kolkhozes. A larger proportion of the rural poor were absorbed by forced industrialization in the totalitarian communist regimes, which was associated with the name of communist leader, Mátyás Rákosi (1892–1971) who ruled the country in the periods of 1948–1953 and 1955–1956. The era of totalitarian dictatorship ended with the anti-totalitarian and anti-communist (although not anti-socialist) revolution of 1956.

The “soft dictatorship” of the reformist politics of consolidation launched by János Kádár (1912–1989) in the 1960s was able to make

society digest the shock of the 1940s and 1950s. The old issues raised by the populist writers (large estates, land, agrarian poverty) became obsolete. Populist thought, however, survived in a cultural form through a linkage to literature, and in the meantime it did good service to the opponents of reform with the criticism of Western modernization and consumer society. It played a role in the revival of national traditions from the seventies onwards and, as a new element, it put on the agenda the problem of Hungarian minorities living in bordering countries. Thus it tried to make populist cultural heritage a national one, and also to maintain the idea of “middle of the road”—which had a different meaning earlier—equally turning against Western liberal capitalism and Eastern internationalist communism. Populists found internationalism common to both, and they condemned the economic influence of the Western multinational concerns as well as the power monopoly of the Soviet type system. They tended to regard both as foreign oppression. Although the messages of populist writers could not be explicit due to censorship, it was this group which established the nationalist interpretation of populism with special attention to the situation of Hungarian minorities living abroad.

Communist cultural policy, often associated with the name of György Aczél (1917–1991), culture boss of the Communist party, tried to use the populist resurgence to divide the opposition in the late 1970s. He suggested that the two major variants of criticism against the regime—Western and populist—could not have a common platform, as the urban opposition groups were Jewish and the *népi* were not. This rumor propaganda, which was amplified by the populists at the rhyme of systemic change,²⁹ has again made anti-Semitism and the conflict between Jews and non-Jews a (not so transparent) political issue. It meant a past anachronism for the younger generations that had grown up in the shadow of the Kádár-system, having learned about the “Jewish question” and the populist vs. urban conflict only in history books.³⁰

²⁹ S. Csoóri, *Nappali hold* (Budapest: Püski, 1991); I. Csurka, *Vasárnapi jegyzetek* (Budapest: Püski-Magyar Fórum, 1991).

³⁰ Cf. “Népiek és urbánusok – egy mítosz vége,” *Századvég* 2, (1989), special issue.

Populism as Discourse of Intellectuals who Entered Democratic Politics (1987–1994)

By the second part of the 1980s, the cultural criticism of popular origins was replaced by the organization of political movements with the pluralization of the intelligentsia and society.³¹ The Hungarian Democratic Forum (*Magyar Demokrata Fórum*, MDF), which was established as a loose intellectual association in Lakitelek in September 1987, was transformed into a political organization a year later. Not accepting “either the tag of pro-government or of opposition and the pressure of choice,”³² the Forum did not initially function as a party, yet it was active as a party that collected groups from a wide range. Populist thinking emerged from its purely cultural forms and reappeared on the political stage. It reappeared under such historical conditions that its effect could become far greater than that of the former National Peasant Party. The disappearance of the Soviet oppression, the return of national sovereignty, the seemingly “classlessness” of the Kádár era, the desire for a welfare society, and the lack of new political ideas apparently strengthened the assumption that the time may have come for the renaissance of populism.

By then, however, the anti-capitalism of the late successors of the populist writers was in contrast to the “embourgeoisement” of the majority of Hungarian society. Thus what they represented was instead a romantic notion of society, the respect of traditions, moralizing and nationalism—in addition to the demand for economic democracy and social security³³—that remained from populism. The advocates of the “middle-of-the-road” attitude, setting out as leftists, allied themselves with those authentically center-right gentry-conservative politicians in order to ensure their success at the elections, and whose predecessors were the adversaries of the populist intelligentsia of the 1930s.³⁴ The national issue, as separate from popular radicalism, became the common denominator of their alliance. This political change that apparently parted from populism—coupled with the moderate message of the “calm force” that successfully reached the middle strata—brought about the electoral success

³¹ S. Agócs and E. Medvigy, eds., *A magyarság esélyei. Lakitelek, 1987. A tanácskozási hiteles jegyzőkönyve* (Budapest-Lakitelek: Antológia-Püski, 1991).

³² “Az MDF alapítólevele” *Hitel*, November 1988: 50–51.

³³ “Az Magyar Demokrata Fórum programja” *Hitel*, May 10, 1989: 50–52.

³⁴ Cf. S. Radnóti, “Most hirtelen téli mesék képei kielevenednek,” interview by Ágnes Széchenyi, *Kritika*, March 1992: 6–10; A. Bozóki, “The Metamorphoses of the Hungarian Democratic Forum,” *East European Reporter* 5, 2 (1992): 63–66.

of the MDF, organizing itself into a party. The president of the party, the liberal-conservative József Antall (1932–1993) became prime minister in 1990. Although the concept of the nation of conservatives and populists was initially different—the conservatives were thinking in terms of a historical nation-state and the populists in cultural nation—they were brought closer by the moral interpretation of their political mission. Their objective was to present the entire right (from center to the extremes) in a single, big party, but their cooperation did not prove to be lasting.

The difficulties of economic transformation, growing unemployment, and the downward slide of one part of the middle class had again strengthened social dissatisfaction. The voice of radicalism grew stronger in parliamentary debates on “doing justice,” compensation, and property return to the Church, suppressing the moderates’ “calm force.” István Csurka (1934–2012), then vice-president of the MDF and leader of his movement the Hungarian Road (*Magyar Út*), used this moment to launch an attack against professional politicians of his party—and, through them, against the democratic system—in August 1992, and provoked the gravest crisis in the history of the MDF. In his manifesto Csurka demanded that the wing of the MDF that was of “national spirit” (extreme right in essence) should remove the “liberal” Antall government that engaged in a “politics of pacts,” or should press it to settle the political conflicts by force and not by compromises. Csurka presented a theory of conspiracy, by which he explained why the “issues of Hungarian destiny” were not solved, arguing that the parties in opposition were intertwined with Western liberal finance circles, which—because they were Jewish—financed the representatives of the communist nomenclature turned managers. Their common feature was that they were alien to Hungarians, as contrasted to the “national middle class rooted in the people,” and therefore were unable to understand the problems of Hungarians even if they wanted to. All this would excuse the national-populist forces from the pressure of seeking compromises.³⁵

Nevertheless, Csurka failed to impress the middle class by his anti-Semitic proposals, for which the values of bourgeois welfare had been more attractive than the exclusivity and witch-hunt of the Hungarian Road. In his later writing Csurka did not strive to create a national middle class, rather he tried to mobilize the “bitter hinterland” of the common people.³⁶ With this he tried to return to the populism of the popular writers

³⁵ I. Csurka, “Néhány gondolat a rendszerváltozás két esztendeje és az MDF új programja kapcsán,” *Magyar Fórum*, August 20, 1992: 9–16.

³⁶ I. Csurka, “Keserű hátszország,” *Magyar Fórum*, December 31, 1992: 8–9.

who turned to the underclass, instead of the middle class populism of Dezső Szabó. Although Csurka sensed accurately the growing inequalities of Hungarian society, he was wrong when he thought that he would be able to mobilize those who were sliding towards the periphery through anti-elitism and nationalism. Thus he found himself the representative of extreme rightist radicalism: he has become the Hungarian Le Pen. His writings have gone from anti-communistic³⁷ to a comprehensive, combatant criticism of liberalism.³⁸

To solve existing social tensions, a true populist policy would wish to find such political alternatives that can be realized (or are at least credible), rather than adjust the existing people to an imaginary political idea. Despite all his qualities, Csurka could not become a populist politician, because the preconditions of populist politics “of the Argentine type” were missing for the realization of his program. The majority of the unemployed were unskilled, rather than skilled, and thus in a far more disadvantageous position. In Argentina populist governmental policy could establish itself as a result of collective action of the large, mobile, and skilled emigrant (and other) groups. In Hungary, however, the equivalent groups did not think of collectively asserting their political interests. Middle class in Hungary was much weaker and its members aimed at developing individual survival strategies instead of organizing themselves collectively. The older and less educated people tended to turn away from the entire political order, while younger generations faced increasing difficulties to enter the labor market.³⁹

Successful populist politicians are popular, easy to understand, and, above all, their political messages can be followed by the targeted masses. They tend to say what the people want to hear from them; for that they need flexibility and pragmatism. Csurka’s political aims, however, were too radical for the masses. For these reasons, his message was not open and inclusive, but isolating, racist, and exclusive.⁴⁰ He represented a sort

³⁷ I. Csurka, “Jogunk van arra, hogy törvényt tegyünk,” *Magyar Fórum*, February 18, 1993.

³⁸ I. Csurka, “A liberális jogállam hazugsága,” *Szárszó Fórum*, August 25, 1993.

³⁹ The relevant literature on the social costs of post-communist economic transformation includes L. Bruszt and J. Simon, *A lecsendesített többség* (Budapest: MTA TTI, 1990); M. Z. Petschnig, ed., *Jelentés a gazdasági átalakulás 1990–1993 közötti folyamatairól* (Budapest: Pénzügykutató, 1994); P. Mihályi, *A magyar privatizáció krónikája, 1989–1997* (Budapest: KJK, 1998); E. Szalai (2001), *Gazdasági elit és társadalom a magyarországi újkapitalizmusban* (Budapest: Aula, 2001); F. Gazsó and L. Laki (2004), *Fiatalok az újkapitalizmusban* (Budapest: Napvilág, 2004).

⁴⁰ It will be most obvious in the rhetoric of MIÉP.

of “old school” right-wing populism of literary intellectuals, which had gradually lost its appeal.

Why There Was No Chance for Peronism in Hungary in the 1990s

Social science literature has often referred to twentieth century political developments in Latin America as a possible scenario for Eastern Europe after the years of transition. Some exponents of this proposition argued that peripheral capitalism would probably produce illiberal democracies, if not hybrid regimes, with or without populism.⁴¹ Some tended to see Peronism as an option for the post-communist regimes, or if not, a kind of lesson to be learned. The appearance of authoritarian political leaders like Vladimir Mečiar in Slovakia, Slobodan Milosevic in Serbia, Lukashenka in Belarus, or Franjo Tuđman in Croatia in the 1990s could indeed give ground to this impression. More than twenty years after the transition, there are some strong signs of peripheral capitalism in the region, especially the widening gap between the rich and the poor, which was reminiscent of Latin America. Nevertheless, the resurrection of Peronist populism in Eastern Europe was not a realistic way to go in the post-transition years.⁴²

By his style and political tactics, József Torgyán, President of the Independent Smallholders' Party (*Független Kisgazdapárt*, FKGP) in the 1990s, could be regarded as an ideal-typical populist politician. Although Torgyán was an excellent speaker, a real demagogue, in the original sense of the term, who understood all the tricks of “low speech,” his relative lack of success was caused by his lack of political strategy and program: he demanded total re-privatization and spoke against (supposed) foreign

⁴¹ E. Commisso, S. Dubb, and J. McTigue, “The Illusion of Populism in Latin America and East Central Europe” in *Flying Blind: Emerging Democracies in East Central Europe*, ed. Gy. Szoboszlai (Budapest: The Hungarian Political Science Association, 1992): 27–58.

⁴² On this literature see: F. H. Cardoso and E. Faletto, *Dependency and Development in Latin America* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1979); E. Laclau, “Peronism in Historical and Comparative Perspective” in *Sociology of the 'Developing Countries': Latin America*, ed. E. Archetti, P. Cammack and B. Roberts (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1987): 137–147; L. Whitehead, “The Alternatives to 'Liberal Democracy': A Latin American Perspective” in *Prospects for Democracy: North, South, East, West*, ed. D. Held (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1993), 312–329; A. Boeckh, “Populism in Latin America: Economic Crises and the Rise of New Development Coalitions,” CEU Working Paper, 1993.

interests in defense of the homeland. His prime objective was to recruit followers at all cost,⁴³ and his exaggerated promises with no concept only ended up being ridiculous. His party was a party of “nostalgia” for the pre-communist times that was unable to attract supporters from any other social groups beside the rural, uneducated, and aged population and the easily definable, relatively small group of farmers. The methods used by József Torgyán to expand his electoral base closely resembled the strategic steps of President Juan Domingo Perón in the 1940s in Argentina: his actress wife attempted to organize a “Torgyán party” and female populist Ágnes Maczó, who had five children, referred to herself as the “representative of the people,” and was pushed into the foreground.⁴⁴ Compared to Perón, his possibilities were far more limited. Nevertheless, he remained an important figure of the Hungarian post-communist politics until 2002.⁴⁵

In Hungary, despite the occasional lack of legitimacy⁴⁶ of the new democratic regime, the nationalist and social populist politics were limited in the first part of the 1990s. The reasons of that are manifold. It was equally due to the heritage of the “soft communist” past of the Kádár regime, and to the general economic and political characteristics of transformation. Moreover, in the first years of communist rule in Hungary in the 1950s, people had the opportunity to see the disadvantages of “personality cult,” and thus became skeptical towards it. The relative popularity of János Kádár was the result of the fact that by presenting himself as a Puritan, and he was against the personalization of politics. In the Kádár regime, the majority of society followed individualist strategies of survival, and during the course, had become less susceptible to collectivist political demagoguery. Instead of collectivism, the soft dictatorship had created informal patron-client lines, along which people could assert their interests informally, and compensate for the losses suffered in the economic transformation. After the fall of communism, the size of those groups that had nothing to lose was limited, their conditions were deteriorating, and this kept them from supporting such political actions.

But there are some other more general reasons that explain the lack of successful populist mobilization in Hungary after the regime change as

⁴³ Cf. M. Tarján, ed., *Torgyán* (Budapest: Danube Budapest Rt, 1991).

⁴⁴ Á. Maczó, *A nép kalodája* (Budapest: Püski, 1991).

⁴⁵ Between 1998 and 2001 József Torgyán was the Minister for Agriculture and Countryside Development in the Orbán cabinet. However, the once powerful FKGP did not receive even one percent of the votes at the 2002 general elections, thus the political career of Torgyán came to an end.

⁴⁶ J. Kis, “Gondolatok a közeljövőről,” *Magyar Hírlap*, December 24, 1992.

well. First, politics appealing to the people, and alluding to a state-defined concept of justice, had been present in Hungary in extreme forms (fascism, communism), and have caused serious damage and backwardness. The memories of these were alive for a long time. Hungary after 1989 was more a “post-populist,” individualistic society than a pre-populist one.⁴⁷ Second, the small size of the country and its dependence upon the world economy limited the space for economic nationalism, which was a feature of populism. The broad masses of Hungarian society saw no alternative to the desirable, Western welfare democracies. There was no massive aversion to the penetration of Western capital in Hungarian society, rather people wanted to have their share of the benefits. Third, in the society, during the regime change, the intelligentsia committed to the ideals of liberalism, democracy, and autonomy of the individual was quite influential and they were still credible at that time.⁴⁸ For the decisive social strata, being those who could take part in the conflict, the concept of capitalism and democracy seemed to belong together. The social strata that would have been able to produce a Latin American type of populism, through forming an alliance and demanding democracy as well as authoritarian paternalism, was missing. Fourth, populism usually evolves in places where considerable social groups believe that there is much to be distributed, so they hope that by changing the internal proportions of social redistribution, they might find themselves in a more favourable position. But due to the indebtedness of the country and the initial strength of the belief in “entrepreneurial spirit,” no such belief was apparent in Hungary in the early years of post-communist democracy.⁴⁹ Fifth, a characteristic

⁴⁷ Cf. B. Greskovits, *Political Economy of Protest and Patience* (Budapest: Central European University Press, 1997).

⁴⁸ One of the best demonstrations of this statement can be found in J. Szacki, *Liberalism after Communism* (Budapest: Central European University, 1995). For Jerzy Szacki the legacy of liberal dissent contributed to the disbelief in the state after the transition.

⁴⁹ However, this situation lasted until 2000–2001 only. Due to the success of the austerity measures of the so-called “Bokros package” of 1995 (named after the finance minister Lajos Bokros) and the success of political consolidation and economic development, Hungarian society started to push for more welfare measures. Those were installed by the first Orbán government in 2001–2002, and later reached their peak during Péter Medgyessy’s social democratic government which spent heavily to keep his election promised on “welfare regime change.” Due to these policy changes, by the late 2000s Hungary had become the largest welfare spender (relative to GDP) among the new Eastern European EU member states. Hungary found itself unprepared and defenseless for the outbreak of the global financial crisis in 2008 and had to turn immediately to IMF for new loans. This undermined the belief in liberal democracy and market economy and

feature of populism is confidence in the central role of the state, but in Hungary such confidence and the expectations resulting from it were missing. Even if they had existed, the weak state heavily in debt was not in a position to meet these expectations. Sixth, paradoxically, the relatively strong individualism of Hungarian society and its scepticism toward the state in the 1990s did not only weaken the credibility of the new democracy (which could not exist without an accepted authority of the state), but it also hindered the development of populism temporarily (which cannot flourish long without the belief in a strong, paternalistic, redistribute state).⁵⁰ Finally, the chances of populist mobilization were further reduced by the fact that there were underclass groups that were turning away from politics, falling behind, and even forming ghettos, which could not be mobilized by any kind of political agitation, not even populism.

Social, economic, and cultural conditions did not favor the Latin America scenario. But this condition started to change with the austerity package of 1995, a late promotion of shock therapy by the socialist-liberal coalition government. At the beginning, dissatisfied groups, those that were sinking into poverty and falling behind, oriented themselves towards the extreme right to a lesser extent, and to a greater extent towards the old-school socialists. Thus, the mixture of Left and Right, which crosses class boundaries, gained influence.

Populism from Below: Failed Attempts for a More Inclusive Polity in the 1990s

In Hungary, the strikes organized by the trade unions were only able to mobilize a few people, and they were not able to influence government policy in the 1990s. The strongest trade union, the National Alliance of

made people too willing to accept state interventionism in the name of economic nationalism by 2010. Cf. A. Bozóki, *Virtuális köztársaság* (Budapest: Gondolat, 2012); For regional comparison see: D. Bohle and B. Greskovits, *Capitalist Diversity on Europe's Periphery* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2012).

⁵⁰ The legacy of anti-communist individualism, the deep skepticism toward institutions and the survival of "ghetto political cultures" undermined the successful formation of consent on public interest. Cf. K. Jowitt, "The Leninist Legacy" in *Eastern Europe in Revolution*, ed. I. Banac (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1992), 207–24; J. Böröcz, "Informality Rules," *East European Politics and Societies* 14, 2 (2000): 348–80; G. Meyer, ed., *Formal Institutions and Informal Politics in Central and Eastern Europe: Hungary, Poland, Russia and Ukraine* (Opladen: Barbara Budrich Publishers, 2006).

Hungarian Trade Unions (*Magyar Szakszervezetek Országos Szövetsége*, MSZOSZ), liked to use elements of populist politics (putting the difficult to grasp values, such as “justice,” ahead of other social values and political demagogy). However, this was not populism, because the anti-elitism, the desire for an independent political role, and challenging the system of democratic institutions were instead limited to the trade unions. The largest unions were more oriented towards 1.) acquiring suitable positions for their negotiations with the employers and government in the field of economics; 2.) acquiring political influence in the leftist parties, particularly in the Hungarian Socialist Party. Demagogy itself cannot be identified with populism, though it is undoubtedly part of it. Demands that are not populist in their content or in their possible consequences can be expressed in a demagogic way.

To some extent, groups that have been disappointed by the regime change of 1989 strengthened the camp of populism.⁵¹ They demanded the consistent completion of systemic change or, in other words, the replacement of the elite through a “second” or “permanent” revolution,⁵² and also wanted strongly state-controlled privatization. In addition to Csurka’s Hungarian Justice and Life Party (*Magyar Igazság és Élet Pártja*, MIÉP), this heterogeneous group is comprised of: some smallholders groups, members of the Hungarian Market Party, former fighters of the revolution of 1956, political prisoners, former followers of plebeian democrat György Krassó,⁵³ and groups that are dissatisfied with compensation, or attack the Constitutional Court because it hindered their plans of doing justice. Here can also be mentioned those who believe that the revolution “withered,” and the original goals were betrayed and those who demand a broad-based national unity instead of the “policy of pacts” of the parties.⁵⁴ The representative meeting of these groups was held in August 1993 in Balatonszárszó in the spirit of anti-liberalism.⁵⁵ The addresses of this meeting indicated that the coalition of the populist-nationalist and national

⁵¹ A. Bozóki and M. Sükösd, “Civil társadalom és populizmus a kelet-európai demokratikus átmenetben,” *Mozgó Világ* 18, 8 (1992): 100–112; A. Bozóki, ed., *Democratic Legitimacy in Post-Communist Societies* (Budapest: T-Twins, 1994).

⁵² F. Fehér and Á. Heller (1992), “Jobboldali permanens forradalom?” in *Kelet-Európa “dicsőséges forradalmai”* (Budapest: T-Twins, 1992): 197–202.

⁵³ The followers of György Krassó (1932–1991) were members of the Hungarian October Party between 1989 and 1991.

⁵⁴ Z. Bíró, *Elhervadt forradalom* (Budapest: Püski, 1993); I. Pozsgay, *1989. Politikuspálya a pártállamban és a rendszerváltásban* (Budapest: Püski, 1993).

⁵⁵ For details see the articles of the *Szárszó Fórum* 1, August 1, 1993.

conservatives, created at the end of 1989, had been in disintegration.⁵⁶ The anti-institutional argumentation was similar, but the rhetoric employed the concepts of civil society in the case of populist organizations such as the “Committee of Social Adjustment,” the “Intellectual-Moral Parliament,” and the “Civic Movement for the Republic.” Economic nationalism, almost always accompanying populist politics, appears in these groups: it is mostly they who object to, and hence wish to limit, the inflow of foreign capital, or who want to prohibit the purchase of land by foreigners once and for all.

The initiative of the Association of People Living Below Subsistence Level (*Létminimum Alatt Élők Társasága*, LÁÉT) at the end of 1992 may be regarded in many respects as an “underclass” populist experience, because it aimed to create a social coalition that went beyond the impoverished segments of society, crossing boundaries to gain the support it demanded. At first the Association organized a hunger strike against the anti-social policy of the government and, next, it collected a hundred thousand signatures for a plebiscite that would oblige the government to dissolve itself before the elections were due. This was an initiative coming from below, which successfully utilized the general dissatisfaction of the public toward Parliament and the parties, something that could turn against the entire political elite. The plebiscite was not held; hence the actual opinion of society remained unknown. However, when the Constitutional Court declared the initiative anti-constitutional, it did not provoke a new wave of protest across society, which shows that the action of the LÁÉT was not based on a real multi-class alliance, but expressed only the dissatisfaction of the poorest strata.

After the shock of political and economic transition, the political class in power had to face the challenge of democratic consolidation. In theory, consolidation is the policy of social peace, healing of wounds and the common prosperity to a gradually widening segment of the population. It is a policy that encourages a diversity of identities, instead of forcing them into the over-simplified, dichotomy-based worlds of the political left and right. Liberal democracy can secure both freedom in politics and freedom from politics at the same time. For this reason, the idea of “permanent revolution” is alien to its rhetoric and essence.

⁵⁶ J. Bayer, “Lakitelektől Kenderesig – és vissza?,” *Népszabadság*, September 4, 1993.

Reinterpreting Democratic Consolidation: Populism as Anti-liberalism (1998–2002)

The coalition government of Fidesz and the Smallholders' Party led by Viktor Orbán attempted to consolidate democracy by using the controversial slogan of an "all-out attack" in the period of 1998–2002. This proved to be a contradictory policy. As it soon came out, consolidation could not be concluded by further dividing society and widening the gap between social groups. Consolidation could not be done by reducing the political field to one dimension, namely to the dichotomy of friend or foe. In 1998 Viktor Orbán felt that it was the last moment to rearrange power structures and implement a change in elite. Called "more than government change," the program was an effort to modernize the Right. It intended to build a "Fidesz-Hungary" in order to help implement a new political structure in the name of a second revolution. Orbán believed that it was better if two oligarchies competed for power than just one, and he therefore made the effort to organize a possible economic and social base for the contest for a divided Hungary. Instead of social reforms, he saw it as his mission to change the elite, secure key positions for his supporters, construct a new base of support, and construct an institutional background for Fidesz once and for all. He could not align the majority of the people with his program.

The first Orbán government consciously identified the political community with the cultural community (even though the latter notion was only with reference to the Right) and it contributed to its electoral defeat in 2002. It is one of the basic characteristics of a liberal democracy that political and cultural communities are utterly different: any number of cultural communities might peacefully coexist within a single political one. Anyone trying to enforce an existing (and culturally heterogeneous) political community to follow the norms of one specific culturally homogeneous community proclaims that he or she is not necessarily committed to the principles of liberal democracy. The first Fidesz government tried to balance the division of the political community with the reconstruction of the imaginary cultural community of the nation outside the borders.⁵⁷ It became more important that Orbán considered himself to be the leader of a country or of a state. While he was constantly making reference to 15 million Hungarians, the citizens felt that he was only realizing the interest of voters on the right, something that caused tension over the policies of

⁵⁷ A. Bozóki (2003), *Politikai pluralizmus Magyarországon* (Budapest: Századvég, 2003).

the Orbán government. When he argued for the spiritual strengthening of Hungarians and their reunion (which brought with it the suspicion of nationalism), the country's left could easily have felt that this rhetoric of the spiritual reunification of Hungarians across borders was only used to make people accept the symbolic and normative structure of an imaginary cultural community that was dear to the government. It was capable of causing fear.

It seemed that the first Orbán government was inclined to restructure all of society from above with the values and models of one particular cultural group. The government does have the function of organizing society, but the organization of cultural communities is not its responsibility or task, and generally occurs from below following civic models. The prime minister vainly sent the message that "the future is here" because, as it soon became obvious, the past could not be wiped out for long. The coalition could have won in 2002 with a calm, mature, conservative-liberal policy, but with anti-liberal radicalism, they were defeated.

With the policy of social mobilization, Orbán re-drew the political map as had happened in the 1940s and 1950s in Argentina under Perón, in the 1990s in Croatia under Tuđman, and in Slovakia under Meciar. All these countries saw the supporters of illiberal, populist democracy opposing the supporters of liberal democracy. A similar move was observable in Italy in 2001, where the former competition between multiple parties disappeared, and the political struggle's frontline lay between pro-Berlusconi and anti-Berlusconi groups. Some observers even compared it to the U.K. governed by Blair.⁵⁸ The Hungarian election campaign of 2002 saw the fierce and emotionally overheated fright of the pro-Orbán and anti-Orbán political coalitions. The "cold civil war" took the shape of a hot campaign. Although Fidesz lost the election politically, Orbán could manage to create a "second Hungary" politically with his own cultural milieu, which survived despite the electoral defeats.

This sort of political style is often called populist policy, i.e. when the democratic process is represented as a polarized choice: life or death, truth or lie, past or future, good or evil. As mentioned earlier, populism also entails a re-definition of the role of the state, emphasizing its distributive role. Other characteristics of populism are: economic nationalism, a moralistic rhetoric constantly referring to the idea of the nation and justice, a steady process of searching out and stigmatizing the "enemies of the na-

⁵⁸ A. Körösnéyi, "Parlamentáris vagy 'elnöki' kormányzás? Az Orbán-kormány összehasonlító politológiai perspektívából," *Századvég* 5 (2001): 3–38.

tion” (traitors within, communists, big business, financial oligarchy, cosmopolitan intellectuals, and so on), and the polarization and reduction of political pluralism to a one single dimension. During those few years, political competition did not center around different programs and rationally debatable arguments but was reduced to a passionate and symbolically mediated meta-political war of “us vs. them,” which was justified with “cultural” reasons. National symbols (the flag, the circle ribbon, and the national anthem) that represent the unity of the nation were appropriated by Fidesz and its supporters, thus stressing the idea of division. The slogan known from football “Go Hungary” and “Go Hungarians” became the campaign slogan of the party, similarly to the “*Forza Italia!*”⁵⁹ The community of national politics was identified with the circle of Fidesz supporters, and they were called upon to “defend the nation.”⁶⁰ Soon it was evident that populism did not need intellectuals, rather propagandists.

One of the most important components of a leader-centric populist policy is a technique of personalization of power.⁶¹ Modern democracy is, in many ways, a media democracy or a campaign democracy. In such a world, anyone who can simplify his ideas and communicate real or apparent truths in a watered-down but credible way gets the upper hand. Most people prefer parties that transform politics into a visual experience as opposed to those that convey their policies using the classic devices of verbal debates and programs. Feelings become more important than a conscious understanding and acceptance. These feelings are most accessible through those charismatic personalities who communicate the message of the party. The personality that conveys the message becomes the message itself.⁶² In this way the political leader becomes the leader of a charismatic group that is similar to a religious community, and becomes a figure who is central to the experience, and whose politics give those

⁵⁹ Gy. Petőcz (2002), “Forza Hungaria! Olasz-Magyar párhuzamok” in *Hol a határ? Kampánystratégiák és kampányetika*, ed. M. Sükösd and M. Vásárhelyi (Budapest: Élet és Irodalom, 2002): 232–240.

⁶⁰ For more details, see the speech of Viktor Orbán delivered at the University of Physical Education on April 9, 2002, reprinted in the April 10, 2002 issues of *Népszabadság* and *Magyar Nemzet*.

⁶¹ On the personalization of power see for instance: Meyer, ed., *Formal Institutions, Informal Practices*; J. Pakulski and A. Kőrösenyi, *Toward Leader Democracy* (London: Anthem Press, 2012).

⁶² This is not to suggest that all demagogic or emotional communications belong to populism. On this literature see: J. Jagers and S. Walgrave, “Populism as Political Communication Style,” *European Journal of Political Research* 46, 3 (2007): 319–345.

youth who are searching for identity the opportunity to “feel” it. In a “leader-democracy,”⁶³ for the followers of the policy, it conveys the message of experience, immersion and a sense of belonging together; ideologies become identities and the rational-argumentative type of policy becomes a policy of identity.

By 2000, it was visible that some segments of Hungarian society felt a need for this type of claustrophobic, anti-liberal, commanding behavior.⁶⁴ Those living in the countryside needed it more than people living in towns. They could feel that there is someone who tells them what should be done in that irrational, decadent, and confusing world in an understandable and simple way. During the period of the first Orbán government, changes took place in the manner of exercising power that had long lasting consequences.⁶⁵ These include changes in political communication, making politics more dynamic, conditioning people to think long term, and aspiring to make politicians more comprehensible and clear to common people. The first Orbán government looked beyond everyday problems and focused on forming an understandable and attractive picture of the future in a more direct, propagandistic way. The elections of 2002 however, proved that voters were more interested in the present than in the past and believed in the dreams and successes of the future only if they could see them begin in the present. Hungarian voters were not in the situation to be able to disregard the circumstances of their everyday lives.

In his statements after the lost election of 2002, Viktor Orbán found no connection between the performance of the government and the defeat of Fidesz.⁶⁶ He tended to explain the defeat with transcendental causes and started to establish a populist mythology about his own performance against those who allegedly served “foreign interests” and regarded their homeland as a “stock company.” To oppose this, Orbán chose a mythical

⁶³ Cf. A. Körösenyi, “Vezérdemokrácia és az antik orátorok” in *Demokrácia és politikatudomány a 21. században*, ed. Máté Szabó (Budapest: Rejtjel, 2002), 54–76; Pakulski and Körösenyi, *Toward Leader Democracy*.

⁶⁴ Cf. Z. Enyedi and F. Erős, eds., *Authoritarianism and Prejudice: Central European Perspectives* (Budapest: Osiris, 1999); B. Tudosijevic and Z. Enyedi (2008), “Authoritarianism without Dominant Ideology: Political Manifestations of Authoritarian Attitudes in Hungary,” *Political Psychology* 29, 5 (2008): 267–87.

⁶⁵ A convincing argument on this was delivered by Zs. Enyedi, “The Role of Agency in Cleavage Formation,” *European Journal of Political Research* 44, 5 (August 2005): 697–720.

⁶⁶ See for example József Debreczeni’s interview with Viktor Orbán after the elections in J. Debreczeni, *Orbán Viktor* (Budapest: Osiris, 2002).

role to be the spiritual leader of the people, and made it clear that he did not want to get used to parliamentary politics again. For one year following the elections, he refused to accept posts in the party or within the faction, and had aversions from the traditional roles in opposition. By organizing “civic circles” and spontaneously active groups, he transferred his political activities into the activities of a movement,⁶⁷ and announced his belief that his followers were not in a minority because the “nation cannot be in opposition.”⁶⁸ As he said in his famous speech after the lost elections:

“We are not going to move from here. Our homeland exists even if it is under the influence of foreign powers, be the Tartars or Ottomans. Our homeland exists even if it is shaken by storms of history. Our homeland exists even if we do not hold governmental responsibility. Our nation is not simply politics, it is our life. Perhaps, our parties and representatives will be in opposition in the Parliament, but we, here in this square, cannot and will not be in opposition, because the nation cannot be in opposition. At worst, a government might turn to be in opposition to the people, if it gives up the goals of the nation.”⁶⁹

Orbán wanted to represent the nation by rising above opposition parties, and wanted organize the infrastructure and social base of a new future Hungary that he imagined.

Yet he was still the prisoner of his own campaign rhetoric. From leading Fidesz as a party campaigning for election victory, he moved to the idea of building a wide political movement, a future right-wing party union. The first Orbán government made an attempt to realize goals which confronted one another: the “revolution of souls” and consolidation. He prioritized confrontation to compromise in his politics, and voters did not like that. By the time he returned to Fidesz as President—after a year of internal emigration—he positioned himself as the unquestionable leader of his party and changed the internal party rules, procedures, and regulations accordingly. Since 2003, Orbán has not simply been an elected representative of Fidesz, it is Fidesz that belong to him and represents him.

⁶⁷ Such groups were formed or reactivated like the Conscience '88, Hungarian Irredentist Movement, and the civic groups like Alliance for the Nation, Go Hungary! Movement, Movement of the Youth of April and so on. Cf. L. T. Papp, “Action Hongrie,” *Élet és Irodalom*, August 2, 2002; On the ambivalent relationship of the civic circles and Fidesz, see I. Elek, “Amatörség és anarchia a polgári körökben,” interview by Lajos Pogonyi, *Népszabadság*, October 1, 2002.

⁶⁸ Speech of Viktor Orbán after the lost elections. Budapest, May 7, 2002. <http://members.xoom.it/hunok2/h0013.html>

⁶⁹ Ibid. My translation.

The New Right government of Hungary led to a campaign in 2002 in which the idea of democracy and nationhood, country and homeland could be juxtaposed and turned against one another. The government wanted to restructure the cultural community according to a (right-wing) cultural value-system, and by doing so, it suggested that whoever fails to agree cannot be a member of the political community. It resulted in people who did not believe in the “order-authority-homeland-work-discipline-family-will” type of value system communicated by the government concerned. The government played on offense because its members believed that the majority of the national political community was behind them and identified with their system of values. They were wrong. With its voluntarism, the cabinet alienated social groups that would have been easy to win over by a moderate center-right government.

The first Orbán government slowly turned out to be slightly anti-Western, anti-American, and anti-liberal, but did not go as far as the old Left approach.⁷⁰ It was a gradual move because, in the meantime, the government successfully negotiated Hungary’s entry to the European Union and was already been a member of NATO since 1999. Negotiating with the EU had a moderating and restricting effect on internal politics in Hungary, which limited Orbán’s room for action. However, Fidesz, which used to be the member of the Liberal International, left the Liberals in Europe and joined the European People’s Party family in 2000.

The Hungarian New Right that had been created by Viktor Orbán between 1998 and 2002 turned out to be an unsuccessful political project in the short run, but it remained very strong culturally. Fidesz lost the parliamentary elections of 2002 and 2006. However, as we will see, it emerged as the only powerful opposition force afterwards.

From Social Populism to Elitist Reformism: The Socialist Modernizers (2002–2010)

Ten countries joined the European Union in 2004. Among them were the Visegrád countries: the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Poland, and Hungary. On the day of the accession three countries out of four had a center-left, social democratic government in power. A day later, Leszek Miller, the

⁷⁰ For the classic Left approach: B. Frankel, “Confronting Neo-liberal Regimes: The Post-Marxist Embrace of Populism and Realpolitik,” *New Left Review* 226 (November-December 1997): 57–92.

Polish premier was forced to resign. He was soon followed by the Czech prime minister, Vladimír Špidla, and the Hungarian Péter Medgyessy. They were replaced by new faces from the same political camp.

The Hungarian prime minister enjoyed a high rate of popularity at the beginning of the term. By 2004, however, it appeared that the initial successes of his materialist-redistributive politics had faded away in the memory of the people. Although Hungary was not in a bad economic state, political actors sensed that there was a crisis in leadership. They felt that leadership was in a way absent, because governance took an *ad hoc* character and political decisions did not constitute any part of a more or less coherent narrative. No one knew what was happening and for what reason. Political strategy was replaced by a merely reactive type of communication. Many felt that the socialist-liberal government would not be able to articulate why they were governing and what ideas and principles motivated their ambition. As long as the political Right was mobilizing crowds on the streets, a message of social peace sufficed. As soon as the opposition calmed down, however, the slogans of peace and normalcy proved to be lacking for the platform of the political Left. Many had the impression, therefore, that following a promising start, things took a turn for the worse.

Why was it that such a “turn for the worse” happened to coincide with one of the most significant political steps Hungary had ever taken? This was the step the nation had wanted for so long; a true chance of catching up, the accession to the richer and more fortunate half of Europe, membership in the EU, from which they had been excluded for decades. A national consensus supported the European accession almost everywhere. It appeared that it did not need any further arguments. The question arose whether one could find some regularity behind these changes in premiers that pointed beyond the personal character of these individuals. To answer to this question, one should take a look at the process of transformation of reformist communists into post-communist technocrats.

People of the Visegrád countries, Hungarians included, expected some crucial achievements from the new political elite and those in charge of the regime change in 1989–1990. First, they wanted democracy; second, a functioning market economy; third, a democratic political community and national identity; and fourth, their country to “join Europe.” Each wish contained one implicit desire for prosperity. These societies experienced being locked behind the Iron Curtain against their will as history’s utmost injustice, as indeed it was. Hungarians found it “natural” to demand that their living standards be on a level with the Austrians. Already at the time

of the regime change, people associated democracy with prosperity. They wanted democracy, because they saw the wealth of the democratic countries. It seemed logical that those who have democracy prosper.

The term “capitalism” was already viewed with disdain, but the phrase “well-functioning market economy” sounded convincing. It was generally perceived that a working market economy was needed in order to usher in prosperity. Redefining one’s national identity and one’s political community was important—especially in the newly emerged post-communist nation states—because it had to be clearly defined who could take part in that prosperity as the legitimate member of the “sovereign people.” That defined who belonged to the nation and could be considered as citizen of the country. Finally, the European and the Euro-Atlantic integration appeared in the target of siding with the strong and the successful.

As long as the expectations of society were matched with international expectations, and as long as these expectations could be answered by formal, institutional arrangements, the technocratic and pragmatic elite of the Hungarian communist successor party, the Hungarian Socialist Party (MSZP) struck a note of accomplishment with their manager style modernization. The international academic world of political science cannot but acknowledge the proficiency with which the Hungarian successor party completed the democratic turnover after 1989, demonstrated a readiness to reform, and handled the crisis of the 1990s. It was no wonder that the leaders of the party—those who were socialized in the post-Marxist, anti-ideological reform period—preferred to see themselves as “neutral experts,” standing against all ideologies. These pragmatic reformers abhorred political ideas, as they recalled the bitter taste of Marxism-Leninism in their mouths. Moreover, wherever they looked, they saw economic decline and political crisis. First they had to prove that they were able to think independently from the ideological outlook of the previous communist generation. They had to prove that they could identify a problem for what it was, without the ideological dressing. They had to be able to solve, or at least to handle, the emerging issues. The great challenge of this generation was to do crisis management in the space between confined political opportunities and economic rationality.

By the 1980s there was not one member among the socialists who still believed in communism. For them, Marxism was an unclear concept of progress with a fuzzy, linear understanding of history with no world-shaking contents attached to it. After 1989, the general opinion among the socialists was that only the specific analysis of a specific situation, only conscientious management and the handling of the various crises mat-

tered. So the flower of modernization was placed into an empty vase. The post-communist political elite wanted a normal, consensual world, free of ideologies. Since the desired consensus happened to be called the “Washington consensus” at the time, it came natural for these political managers to accept the international liberal discourse. They strove to attract capital, thinking it would bring about a society that functioned better.

Such politics could continue only so long as obstacles were eluded on Hungary’s course of regime change, institution-building, economic stabilization, democratic consolidation, and historic EU accession. While the political Right was occupied with rebuilding its base, it was the task of “the Left,” between 1994–1998, to manage the economic crisis, conduct the politics of privatization so far left unfinished by the previous rightist governments, and to show a friendly face towards the West.⁷¹ The Hungarian New Right stepped on stage in 1998 testing its newly gained strength through confrontational behavior. It yearned impatiently to legitimize its new, proud, and very distinct identity by any means. In its eagerness, however, it went too far at that time. They divided the country into the “decadent powers” of the failed communist past and the “bulging forces” of the rising national future. This confrontational behavior of the first Fidesz government created a deep divide in society between pro-Orbán and anti-Orbán masses, which gave the socialists a chance. As it turned out at the 2002 elections, a slight majority of voters, preferring peace to war, turned back to the well-known Left. The fears of the larger part of society were resolved by their electoral victory. The ruling sentiment was that the time of symbolic politics was over, and that it was only a residue of the past. To gain success, one simply had to make trustworthy accomplishments. However, as it turned out soon afterward, for the Left to be successful more was needed than remaining a “party of peace.”

The concept of “welfare regime change,” already introduced in 2002 by the then Prime Minister Péter Medgyessy, identified a social problem: a political debt of the new democracy to its own people. It turned out that democracy has no value for the people as long as a general poverty prevailed over them. There is no value in the nation if it is poor, and there is

⁷¹ In the first electoral cycle after the transition two center-right governments ruled Hungary: the first was led by József Antall (1990–1993) and the second by Péter Boross (1993–94). In the 1994 elections, the Socialist Party won absolute majority and Gyula Horn formed a socialist-liberal coalition government, which lasted until 1998. On the transformation of the Central European communist successor parties see A. Bozóki and J. T. Ishiyama, eds., *The Communist Successor Parties of Central and Eastern Europe* (Armonk, NY: M. E. Sharpe, 2002).

no value in the European Union if it is only a club for the wealthy, by downgrading the new member states. It was no accident that for both the referendum held about the EU accession in 2003 and the EP elections in 2004, the turnout was low in Hungary and in Central Europe. People did not think that technical issues of EU enlargement concerned them. Not that they opposed them; they gave their passive support instead. Having put the unresolved welfare question into the spotlight, it became obvious that one parliamentary cycle was not enough to complete a change in welfare politics. The inability to solve the problem in the short term led to a political crisis of forces labeled as “the Left.” Although in the 1990s they were successful in crisis management, new issues emerged that could not be solved in the same old way, following the old schemes. Increasingly, the correct reaction required strategic thinking, ability for innovation, and commitment by political values. The new issues were not about technical task resolving and crisis management, but about the political content of social democracy. Such values were not to be articulated by experts instead of politicians. “Expertise” is irrelevant when it comes to choosing political values. Value-less elitist politics could only provoke a new wave of populism.

Nonetheless, the promise of renewal of the Socialist Party along “Third Way” lines looked like a promising process. It offered a hope that after one and a half decades of post-communism, things were slowly being put in place. For instance, the political Left stopped acting like the Right, and the other way around. Everything was the other way around in Central Europe in the 1990s: while the Left was busy privatizing, for instance, the Right was “building a nation.” Many felt that this reversal of political roles could not be continued and the ex-communist socialist politics had to re-evaluate itself. The influence of the anti-global movement decreased after September 11, 2001, and the new social democratic politics of the once successful “Third Way” had to face the challenge of renewal. One had to consider whether the increasing crisis of neo-liberalism in the 2000s would destroy its central-leftist, alternative variants or revive its nationalist populist alternative. What happened in Hungary after 2004 was the connection of the region to the present concerns of the Western world. By the 2000s, it appeared that the opportunities of the sort of externally driven follower, or “catching up from behind,” type of technocratic politicking, which gained its identity solely from external sources and which denied the autonomy and the social context of politics, was exhausted.

In 2004, Medgyessy was replaced by Ferenc Gyurcsány, a dynamic socialist prime minister, whose rise was considered the “Third Way”

Left's political answer to the New Right. Gyurcsány was able to keep the socialist-liberal coalition in power as a result of his successful electoral campaign of 2006. His warrior political personality proved to be not as far from the leader of Fidesz as the more reserved Medgyessy was, which is why Gyurcsány was able to beat his right-wing opponents. From 2004 until the end of the decade, the country's sharp polarization was symbolized by the increasing personalization of politics that centered around the two rivals: Orbán and Gyurcsány.⁷² After a few years in power, the socialist-liberal government of Gyurcsány was widely judged as "Josephinist" in its top-down, modernizing reforms and also overly technocratic and alienated from the people. Although Orbán lost two consecutive elections, he remained party leader and managed to achieve his long-term political goal: the social integration of New Right and further polarization of Hungarian politics. The sharp opposition of political camps resulted in protest campaigns against the government in the fall of 2006, which culminated in street battles between protesters and the police. Finally, partly as a result of the global economic crisis of 2008, Orbán was able to reintegrate the political center on populist ground, and returned to power with a qualified majority in the new parliament of 2010.

Although the "negotiated revolution" of 1989 was largely elite driven, most people (rather passively) endorsed the new regime of freedom. They could travel, start their own enterprises, and speak freely about their lives in public. Free elections, a representative government, a constitutional court, and democratic opposition were all firmly established. The years between 1990 and 2010 were far from unproblematic, as prime examples show: a widening gap between the living standards of the capital city and the rest of the country as well as the educated classes and the Roma population. Still, the regime was a liberal democracy where governing parties lost elections and the media aggressively criticized politicians. Democracy was consolidated, and the country successfully joined the European Union.⁷³

The first signs of deconsolidation occurred in 2006 and were followed by the rapid decline of GDP during the economic crisis. The regime could

⁷² On the increasing role of media and their relation to populism, see: G. Mazzoleni, "Populism and the Media" in *Twenty-First Century Populism*, ed. Albertazzi and McDonnell, 49–64.

⁷³ Cf. U. Korkut, "The 2006 Hungarian Election: Economic Competitiveness versus Social Solidarity," *Parliamentary Affairs* 60, 4 (August 2007): 1–16; A. Bozóki and E. Simon, "Hungary since 1989" in *Central and Southeast European Politics since 1989*, ed. Sabrina P. Ramet (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 204–232.

not keep its original promises and was widely judged as corrupt. By the end of the first decade of the 2000s, it became vulnerable to a new populist challenge.⁷⁴ An era had come to an end, but anti-elitist, populist politics survived in the opposition. It is represented by a mix of nationalism and neo-liberalism to be a new form of populist politics delivered by the Fidesz government since 2010. Despite all of its problems, Hungary after 1989 has been a relatively successful in a worldwide comparison. But the success has been challenged in ways that were very much unexpected.

Populism as a Mix of Nationalism and Neoliberalism (2010–2014)

The victory of Fidesz in the April 2010 elections altered the developments of the previous twenty years in several instances. Although Fidesz received 53 percent support from voters in the general elections, this translated into a two-third majority in Parliament due to the oddities in the proportional electoral system. With such a super majority, the second Fidesz government was willing and able to change all fundamental laws, including the constitution.

The returning leader, Prime Minister Viktor Orbán, conceived of this victory as a “new social contract” or even as a “revolution,” declaring the need for fundamental political changes purportedly as the “will of the people.” Orbán declared the installation of his “System of National Cooperation” that sought to replace the “troubled decades” of liberal democracy. In a characteristic populist fashion, Orbán announced a “declaration on national cooperation,” a text which had to be put on the walls of all institutions of public administration.⁷⁵ It reads,

“We, members of the National Assembly declare that we shall elevate the new political and economic system emerging on the basis of the popular democratic will to the pillars that are indispensable for welfare, living a decent life, and that connect the members of our diverse Hungarian society. Work, home, family, health and order—these will be the pillars of our common future.”⁷⁶

⁷⁴ Cf. U. Korkut, *Liberalization Challenges in Hungary: Elitism, Progressivism, and Populism* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012).

⁷⁵ The Declaration of National Cooperation can be found in Hungarian, German, and English languages here: http://www.kulugyminiszterium.hu/kum/hu/bal/Kulugyminiszterium/nemzeti_egyuttmukodes_nyilatkozata/.

⁷⁶ Ibid.

Many people asked whether it was possible to roll back history. They wondered whether it was possible to make a reverse transition, back to a hybrid regime within the European Union.

Although the electoral campaign of Fidesz said nothing about these steps, the governing majority started a fundamental restructuring of the political system. The state was fully captured and centralized. Public offices were renamed as government offices. Those in the civil service became easily and legally dismissible. Central and local public administration became heavily politicized, and the former colonized the latter ones. All leading positions in the purportedly independent institutions were filled by Fidesz party-cadres. Retroactive taxation regulations were introduced to punish the personnel of the previous governments. Almost all major government-promoted businesses were offered to entrepreneurs close to Fidesz or allies of the prime minister. Central campaigns were initiated against the “criminal elements” of the previous governments, as well as cultural and intellectual elite. The government press started a campaign against the intellectuals, fiercely attacking philosophers related to the former Georg Lukács School who allegedly received overly generous state funding for its research (which turned out to be false).⁷⁷ Alternative artists, actors, and actresses became targets of populist propaganda. Anti-intellectualism and intolerance of marginal groups and alternative lifestyles, all characteristic features of populism, are again prevalent.⁷⁸

Unlike mainstream European standards, a rare combination of anti-social policies were enacted. Populist and ethno-nationalist rhetoric overshadowed the ongoing neoliberal economic policy processes. By introducing a flat tax system, the cabinet has aimed to win the support of the wealthy against the interests of the poor. Welfare benefits for the homeless and unemployed have been cut from six to three months only, while more money has been given, in “the national interest,” to stay at home mothers for raising more children, promoting a traditional concept of family. New laws on public and higher education control high school and university students more strictly, aiming to significantly reduce the number of university students. These restrictions were presented as bonuses to

⁷⁷ The Georg Lukács School was named after the Hungarian Marxist philosopher who died in 1971. Members of this philosophical circle developed their ideas to different directions but none of them belong to Marxist thought any more. Nevertheless they were the prime target of anti-intellectual policies of the second Orbán cabinet in 2011. This group include Ágnes Heller, Sándor Radnóti and others.

⁷⁸ Cf. V. Tismaneanu, “Hypotheses on Populism: The Politics of Charismatic Protest,” *East European Politics and Societies* 14, 2 (2000): 10–17.

the Hungarian middle class, which was described as the holder of national interests. This middle class populism went effectively hand in hand with the exclusion of lower classes and the unemployed from the nation.

Strict regulations on trade unions effectively have limited the right to strike, and the government has campaigned against some trade union leaders, seeking to discredit the unions. A so-called anti-terrorist organization was set up, mainly to defend the personal security of Viktor Orbán and members of his cabinet. Electoral laws have been changed just a few weeks before the municipal elections (held in October 2010) in order to narrow the chance of smaller parties entering local governments.⁷⁹ The broad powers of the Constitutional Court have been significantly curtailed. Citizenship has been given to ethnic Hungarian who lived outside Hungary in order to gain more potential voters for Fidesz in future elections. The private pension system was nationalized in a coup-like manner, forcing people onto the state pension system. By doing this, Fidesz kept the annual deficit low to achieve the Maastricht criteria of the European Union. Importantly, while Fidesz pursued scrupulously restrictive fiscal policies to please the EU leaders, it took political steps that drove Hungary away from the rest of democratic Europe. A new era of populism, in the form of nationalist neo-liberalism, had begun.⁸⁰

Procedurally, all bills have been proposed as “modifications” of previous regulations by individual MPs of Fidesz and not by the government to avoid public debates and to speed up legislation. Commentators, analysts, and the press hopelessly lagged behind this breathtakingly speedy legislation.

In general, there has been an anti-constitutional coup d'état driven by a single person, the prime minister.⁸¹ Government controlled public media (radio and television channels) did not give a chance for opposition figures to give their opinion. The central propaganda machine transmitted

⁷⁹ This was repeated in 2014 when the governmental majority changed the electoral law a few months before the elections. By doing so Fidesz could maintain its majority in the Budapest city council.

⁸⁰ See in more detail: A. Bozóki, “A magyar demokrácia válsága,” *Élet és Irodalom*, January 13, 2012; Norwegian Helsinki Committee, *Democracy and Human Rights at Stake in Hungary: The Viktor Orbán's Government Drive for Centralisation of Power*. Report 1, 2013.

⁸¹ For more details: I. Vörös, “Alkotmányos jogunk törvényt szegni?,” Interview by Nóra Diószegi-Horváth. *Vasárnapi Hírek*, October 26, 2014; U. Korkut, “A Conservative Putsch at EU's Periphery: Crisis of Democracy in Hungary,” paper presented at the workshop in Comparative European Politics by the British Political Science Association, Gothenburg, Sweden, November 7, 2014.

messages of nationalism and Christian and patriarchal family values with demands for law and order. In the meantime, the governing majority already changed the Constitution nine times in half-year, effectively destabilizing legal security, responsiveness, and accountability. Additionally, in April 2011, the governing majority changed the Constitution of 1989, which is now called the Fundamental Law and contains a long preamble entitled the National Creed emphasizing Christian values, national history, and a united nation as a cultural and political community with state interests. Economic and social rights were fundamentally restricted, if not taken away from the employees. The country is no longer called officially the Republic of Hungary; its new name is simply Hungary “as the people call it,” according to Orbán. Only one sentence refers to the existence of the republic in the Fundamental Law. President Pál Schmitt, hand-picked by Orbán, was a former Olympic champion in fencing who had little or no idea about constitutionalism at all. Since Schmitt lacked any political autonomy, he was easily removed a few months after the signing the Fundamental Law due to a plagiarism scandal.⁸²

Previous electoral defeats motivated Orbán’s feverish wish for revenge. Strangely, these defeats did not weaken his unquestionable leadership position within Fidesz, which he transformed from a democratic entity to a highly hierarchical, centralized party controlled exclusively by him. He is simply transplanting the logic of a boss-controlled populist party to a leader-state. The high rate of unemployment and the increasing influence of the state to all aspects of life have silenced many potential critics. The popularity of Fidesz stayed for a relatively long time because new taxes were always presented in classic populist manner, as decisions that did not hurt ordinary people but rather banks and multinationals that served foreign interests anyway.

Internationally, Orbán was often compared to such populist leaders as Lukashenka (Belarus), Kaczyński (Poland), Chávez (Venezuela), Mečiar (Slovakia), Berlusconi (Italy), Milošević (Serbia), Erdogan (Turkey), Tuđman (Croatia), and others. Some of these comparisons might seem tempting but most of them miss the point. Orbán was not like Lukashenka, because Hungarian authorities did not kill journalists and did not jail or force anti-government protesters into exile. Despite the fact that both loved

⁸² Pál Schmitt served as President from 2010 till 2012. During this time he signed all bills that had passed by the governing majority and therefore he contributed to the transformation of Hungary’s legal and political system significantly. In April 2012, he was forced to resign due to a plagiarism case (i. e. he copy-pasted his doctoral dissertation).

European soccer, Orbán was not like Berlusconi, as the latter already owned several TV channels before he entered government; Orbán used his newly acquired government position to capture the media. Berlusconi was rich already before entering politics while Orbán became rich as result of being in politics. Kaczyński had aimed to establish the “Fourth Republic” in Poland but did not change the liberal economic policy of the country despite his nationalist rhetoric, and he failed very quickly due to the existence of a strong democratic alternative. Chávez nationalized certain industries and campaigned against foreign investors but he favored the lower classes in Venezuela while Orbán preferred promoting the upper middle classes and the national bourgeoisie with economic nationalist rhetoric *and* neo-liberal policies, e.g. minimizing unemployment benefits, introducing low-paying social work, marginalizing the underclass and introducing a relatively low flat tax). Tudman was an uncompromising and principled nationalist leader, a self-elected founder of a “new Croatia,” while Orbán was much more an opportunistic populist who mixed leftist rhetoric and right-wing economic policies with nationalism, just as he was ready to mix traditional values with far right ideas (although he presented himself in Brussels as the last bastion against the rise of the far right). He pursued unorthodox policies and pro-Russian foreign policy orientation like Mečiar did in Slovakia in the 1990s, but he was against the welfare model and also more consistent in attacking and monopolizing democratic institutions.

Turkish Prime Minister (now President) Erdogan used his qualified majority to reshape his country’s political regime but the opposition gained some strength after his first term and prevented him from further restructuring of the regime at least temporarily. As an opportunist, Orbán was not afraid to praise the effectiveness of China’s “market Leninist” communist capitalism while on a visit in Beijing he equally encouraged anti-capitalist, anti-globalist, and anti-communist sentiments at home. As someone who was truly at home in populist politics, Orbán followed non-consistent policies: aiming to reunite the nation with cultural nationalist arguments, he redistributed the income of the state from the poor to the rich. His populism was based on middle class fears of being disenfranchised and his populist talk covered his political intention to promote the rise of a new elite. He gave a voice to the antisocial, anti-underclass sentiments of the upper and middle classes in Hungary.⁸³

⁸³ For a more detailed description of the post-2010 regime in Hungary see: Bozóki, *Virtuális köztársaság*; A. Bozóki, “Occupy the State! The Orbán regime in Hungary,” *De-*

Despite all efforts to homogenize the people behind the leader's political camp,⁸⁴ Hungary still has a multiparty system, though its formerly liberal democracy became increasingly non-competitive and illiberal because of a rigged political, judicial, and media system.⁸⁵ The free but unfair elections of 2014, both national and local, reinforced Hungary's place among the illiberal regimes. Freedom of the press is increasingly restricted to the blogosphere and to opposition-leaning journals. This is presented in the ethno-populist rhetoric of the government as a genuine "national freedom fight" against the European Union, the International Monetary Fund, and other Western, multinational institutions. Nevertheless these and similar attacks on the multinational firms and institutions hide the neoconservative-neoliberal characteristics of his policies.

The government enjoyed a democratic "input legitimacy," due to the free elections in 2010, even if it has not been followed by a democratic "output legitimacy" afterwards. Even the democratic input became questionable after the 2014 elections that were widely evaluated as free but not fair. The method of governance can be characterized as the "tyranny of the (qualified) majority" in the legislature, which gives permanent backing to the prime minister to feel like being the embodiment of the will of the people. This underlines the importance of a visible, prevalent, and consistent democratic resistance to the authoritarian-populist tendencies. If Hungarian civil society resists this illiberal, neo-populist challenge, it is possible that democracy may become stronger than it was before.

Conclusions

The goal of this chapter was to demonstrate that populism can fit easily both with different political regimes (democracy, semi-democracy, and non-democracy), and ideologies (socialism, nationalism, neoliberalism). Certainly, it is one of the most elusive concepts in the field of the history of ideas and political science. Political changes in Hungary demonstrate that populism is flexible enough to complement both redistributive and

batte, July 16–21, 2012. Hungarian Civil Liberties Union, *Disrespect for European Values in Hungary 2010–14*, (Budapest: HCLU, 2014); A. Bozóki, "Broken Democracy, Predatory State, Nationalist Populism" in *The Hungarian Patient*, eds. P. Krasztev and J. Van Til (Budapest: Central European University Press, 2015), 3–39.

⁸⁴ In 2010 and 2014 Orbán campaigned with the slogan: "Csak a Fidesz" (*Only Fidesz*).

⁸⁵ P. Bajomi-Lázár, *The Party Colonisation of the Media in Central and Eastern Europe* (Budapest–New York: CEU Press, 2014).

neoliberal policies. Populist discourse always promises a new, more inclusive community, but at the end populist politics often promotes new ways of exclusion.

In democratic societies, the discussion of populism is often related to the quality of democracy. As mentioned above, some scholars distinguish between liberal and populist (i.e. illiberal) democracies.⁸⁶ Further research is needed to clarify whether illiberal democracy can be still considered as democracy in any meaningful way, or it should rather be considered as a hybrid regime, a curious mix of democracy and autocracy. The recent Hungarian “revolutionary” populist turn offers a lesson for theorists of democracy as well. It demonstrates that the concept of modern democracy cannot be reduced to certain institutional frames, because those can easily be compromised by authoritarian-minded leaders in the “populist moment.” The regime of a liberal democracy can be revived only if it is supported by committed and active people. This support for mass political participation, on the other hand, is often channeled into populist movements, which use their popular democratic demands to achieve not necessarily pro-democratic, but anti-elitist political purposes to help promoting a new elite in the name of the people.

⁸⁶ H. Giliomee, *Liberal and Populist Democracy in South Africa* (Johannesburg: South African Institute of Race Relations, 1996); F. Zakaria, *The Future of Freedom: Illiberal Democracy Home and Abroad* (New York: Norton, 2003).

The Political Lives of Dead Populists in Post-socialist Slovakia¹

JURAJ BUZALKA

“Bodies have the advantage of concreteness that nonetheless transcends time, making the past immediately present. ... political transformation is often symbolized through manipulating bodies”²

The popularity of dead leaders in Central and Eastern Europe reached its peak in the years immediately following the collapse of the communist regime. Post-socialist politicians and intellectuals battled as to whom to put into the national pantheon and who should be left out. The disputes were fought over issues such as for whom special laws shall be passed, whose remains shall be reburied, or who should be commemorated with only a bust or a statue. These activities were paid for by ordinary taxpayers who accepted the costs because the activities touched upon heavy-weight political symbols.

The significance of these “corpses on the move” proved even more apparent if they were accompanied by ritual reburials of their remains.³ It thus remains intriguing to read the quote of one such leader whose remains were moved to Slovakia decades after their burial abroad: the first Czechoslovak prime minister of Slovak origin, Milan Hodža. As he prophetically stated in 1925: “the [true] leaders are not always those respected by their contemporaries: always there are many over-appreciated and many underestimated. The strongest leaders are the ones who had

¹ This work was supported by the Slovak Research and Development Agency under the contract no. APVV-0484-10 EUROFORPOL - Changing patterns of EU foreign policy and the small member states. Initial thoughts were prepared while I worked in 7th EU Framework Project No. 225670 MEDEA - Models and their Effects on Development paths: an Ethnographic and comparative Approach to knowledge transmission and livelihood strategies. For valuable comments on the draft of this paper I would like to express my gratitude to the editors of this volume Michal Kopeček and Piotr Wciślik.

² K. Verdery, *The Political Lives of Dead Bodies: Reburial and Postsocialist Change* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1999), 27–28.

³ Ibid.

passed away.”⁴ This recent political necrophilia in Slovakia—as it touches those dead who have become politically sexy—is a reminder of the universal role of political manipulation with the past that serves the present day leadership. It also questions theories of transformation that stress the decreasing role of nationalist belonging after post-socialist regime consolidation.

In the following sections I attempt to define what I consider to be political necrophilia. I then strive to explain why some political symbols became more popular than others in post-socialist Slovakia. I also discuss the issue of reproduction of particular forms of political ideologies and practices in Central and Eastern Europe, namely those I call “post-peasant populism.” In the concluding section I draw attention to some connections between the effects of post-socialist economic transformation and the organization of populist politics.

Political Life of Dead Bodies

In her seminal essay *Political Lives of Dead Bodies*, anthropologist Katherine Verdery shows how important political figures can serve as effective political symbols after they have passed away. As she stresses, the process of transformation is not only about the technical processes of the introduction of democracy, but also the “meanings, feelings, the sacred ideas of morality, the non-rational,” as well as “cosmologies and practices relating to the living and the dead” formed and shaped by post-socialism.⁵ Dead bodies do not talk much on their own, writes Verdery; words can be put into their mouths instead. At the same time, the manipulation of a corpse enables one’s identification with it through one’s own body.⁶ The symbolic “power of the dead” bridges the past with the present and also projects the future for a political community.

Verdery also presents three ways in which post-socialist leaders manipulated bodies for symbolic purposes. These include: statues as symbolic bodies, reburials of important émigré personalities, and reburials of dead politicians who had been persecuted under socialism. Yet, political requests for statue (re)installation in Central and Eastern Europe did not

⁴ Slovak original: “Nie sú vždy vodcami tí, ktorí sú uznávaní súčasníkmi: vždy je medzi nami mnoho precenených a mnoho nedocenených. Najsilnejšími vodcami sú však mŕtvi.”

⁵ Ibid, 25–26.

⁶ Ibid, 33.

include only the statues of humans. Animals also became popular. In addition to hundreds of lions and eagles reappearing everywhere from Szczecin via Bohemian-Moravian highlands up to the Danube plains, there was an abundance of mythical turuls erected could be found in the hills of Buda and its copies installed in forgotten village cemeteries along both sides of *Ipel'* (Ipoly in Hungarian), the river that became the northern border of Hungary in 1918–1938 and after 1945.

With regard to reburials, the activities of Central European leaders included the movement of bodies belonging to politically oppressed personalities under socialism. While their corpses never left their native country, the creators of new post-socialist regimes felt the need to bury them again after 1989. Perhaps the most well known of such reburials was that of the 1956 Hungarian revolution leader, Imre Nagy—an event that took place in the summer of 1989. Additionally, there were thousands of anonymous exhumations of victims of war atrocities all around former socialist Europe. “Bringing home” exiled heroes included such famous personalities as General Władysław Sikorski in Poland, composer Bohuslav Martinů in the Czech Republic, and Béla Bartók in Hungary, among others.⁷ Their human remains unwillingly became involved in legitimization struggles after socialism.

As elsewhere in the post-socialist world, the popularity of corpse transfers reached a peak in Slovakia in the mid-1990s. The remains of prominent representatives of pro-fascist Slovak Republic (1939–1945) who had emigrated after the war also were among those that returned to their native soil. Among them were writers and journalists Jozef Čiger Hronský, Stanislav Mečiar, and Koloman Geraldini. At the same time, prominent military representatives of the Slovak National Uprising against the Slovak Republic (1939–1945) and representatives of democratic emigration during communism—Generals Ján Abruš and Mirko Vesel—also were returned and buried in their native country.⁸ Many representatives of Slovak pre-war and war-time politics—whether of the pro-fascist or democratic camps—remained at home and were silenced under socialism; the legacies of those high level leaders who passed away after having emigrated were similarly forgotten. Thus, all those who had not fit with the official state-socialist pantheon were to be revived after communism collapsed. The most prominent reburial in Slovakia involved the remains of

⁷ See further in Verdery, *Political Lives of Dead Bodies*.

⁸ P. Lukáč, *Dejiny a zahraničná politika v strednej Európe* (Bratislava, Kalligram, 2004), 32.

Milan Hodža, the former prime minister of inter-war Czechoslovakia and member of an old family of Slovak politicians and national leaders. Before presenting how his reburial took place, I will offer some remarks on the politics of memory after socialism in Slovakia.

The Politics of Memory after Socialism

Where did the popularity of personalities whose presence in the public sphere had been suppressed by state socialism come from? Citizens under communism kept memories of the pre-communist period—of personalities and events—in opposition to the official communist version of history. The way memories were preserved ranged from private family commemorations via informal gatherings of friends up to underground movements. This type of memory included a much wider set of information, feelings, and ideologies about the past than any professional “history of historians” could include. Together with new ideologies after socialism—often with the clear intention to revive a “national” tradition—these memories served as building material for the emerging regimes. The mobilization of this multi-layered popular memory after socialism simultaneously led to the revival of humanist and democratic ideals, as well as to nationalist and even fascist propaganda. The fall of direct symbolic-ideological control after 1989 was accompanied by a period of social insecurity. New statues, plates, and public rituals showed the direction of and legitimized the new post-socialist order. In Central and Eastern Europe, this ideological direction was frequently inspired or led by professionals trained in public rituals such as church employees. New and restored statues and gravestones were inspired by the works of intellectuals—often with a communist background—and served as a consolation for those citizens who found themselves in disadvantageous positions after the fall of the old regime. The reburial of political symbols in Central and Eastern Europe thus legitimized actual political power and served as a tool in what Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Rangers called “the invention of tradition.”⁹

In the case of Slovakia, the invention of tradition included the establishment of the independent nation-state as one of the two successor states of Czechoslovakia on 1 January 1993. The establishment of this new state involved the introduction of new official symbols, power legitimization

⁹ See eg. E. Hobsbawm and T. Ranger, eds, *The Invention of Tradition* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983).

practices, as well as changes in the everyday life of some citizens in the new state. It affected everything from the way countrywide political decisions via diplomatic activities should be made to the kind of uniforms presidential guards should wear. As Czechoslovakia was splitting apart, the legitimization of the new Slovak national project often took inspiration from the pro-fascist Second World War era Slovak Republic or from the politics of the Slovak Peoples' Party, which had most openly fueled the idea of Slovak autonomy under the leadership of the prominent Slovak inter-war political figure, Catholic priest Andrej Hlinka. Also the veneration of Roman Catholic statues, symbols, and religious life more broadly appeared to coincide with the fall of state socialism. The patron saints of Slovakia, Saints Cyril and Methodius, as well as popular clergy leaders excluded from communist-era commemorations, were among the examples of this political necrophilia.

A significant contribution to the success of post-socialist political necrophilia was communist cultural politics.¹⁰ This was particularly important in Slovakia where "peasants became nationals"¹¹ during socialist times. The nationalist mythology was invented or reproduced by communist cultural politics, and the obsession of Slovak communists with the national question—dating back even prior to the anti-fascist movement and persisting up to present day in social democratic circles—was crucial also to the Prague Spring of 1968. The Slovak attitude of "federation first" and then "democratization" indicated this ambivalence of ethnic and democratic politics. Particularly successful in Slovakia was an ideological alliance between workers and peasants. This was invented and served as a basis for an ideology of the "plebeian origin" of Slovaks (as opposed to their supposedly more aristocratic neighbors) that should have brought them closer to the egalitarian ideology of communism. The symbolic battles after socialism that incorporated both socialist and pre-socialist national ideologies were succinctly described by historian, Ľubomír Lipták, who himself became famous after he had passed away in 2003.¹² He also recognized that the political necrophilia of Slovak politics had extended beyond a post-socialist pedigree. It cannot be restricted to the period of

¹⁰ See K. Verdery, *National Ideology under Socialism: Identity and Cultural Politics under Ceaucescu's Romania* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1995).

¹¹ E. Weber, *Peasants into Frenchmen. The Modernisation of Rural France, 1870–1914* (Palo Alto: Stanford University Press, 1976).

¹² Ľ. Lipták, "Rošády na piedestáloch 1," *Občianska spoločnosť* 11 (1998): 180–191; idem, "Rošády na piedestáloch 2," *Občianska spoločnosť* 12 (1998): 29–34.

nation-state building or to the period of the third government of the populist and autocratic Prime Minister Vladimír Mečiar (1994–1998), the most prominent practitioner of corpse transfers among post-socialist leaders in Slovakia. As the reburial of Milan Hodža shows, the politics of dead bodies also remained an important political tool after Mečiar's defeat.

Hodža's Bones in Politics

A burial ceremony is a life-cycle ritual of an individual person, but through the politicization of an important person, the ritual can become important for an entire group, such as a nation.¹³ It traces the nation's origin to historical times and builds solidarity within the faith-based community. David Kertzer argued that ritual has four political ends: organizational integration, legitimization, construction of solidarity, and inculcation of political beliefs.¹⁴ He also noted that ritual channels emotions, guides cognition, organizes social groups, and, by providing a sense of continuity, links the past with the present and the present with the future.¹⁵ What is important to remember is that people are not just simple followers of ritual symbols but are also creators of ritual. This makes ritual a powerful tool for political action.¹⁶ Especially in times of change, political leaders use symbolic and ideological tools to support and legitimize their power through images of continuity. Anthony P. Cohen deemed legitimization as less important for directly increasing the power of leaders than for justifying the values expressed in their leadership.¹⁷ This nuanced perspective—as legitimization rituals were not only about the power of individual leaders but also reflected the social base of Slovak society—will also be taken into account with regard to the following symbolic acts.

The reburial ritual I present in the following section, drawn from the perspective of the contemporary press, represented the legitimization of a new political tradition in Slovakia. A short time before Slovakia entered the EU, the ritual appealed to what has been presented as European ideas

¹³ Verdery, *Political Lives of Dead Bodies*, 27–28.

¹⁴ D. Kertzer, *Ritual, Politics, and Power* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1988).

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 9–10.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 12.

¹⁷ A. Cohen, *The Management of Myths: The Politics of Legitimation in a Newfoundland Community* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1975).

and values contradicting the isolationist ones driven by national populism. After decades, these reburials signaled the introduction of a new type of “cosmopolitan” political necrophilia into the sphere that until then had been dominated by communist and/or wartime Slovak commemorations. The symbolic power of the re-buried person must be considered in light of this “invention of tradition” in Slovakia alongside the simultaneous processes in the more successful neighboring countries of Czech Republic, Hungary or Poland. The Slovak “black hole of Europe”—the term used by U.S. Secretary of State, Madeleine Albright at the time of Mečiar’s rule—demanded that particular symbols be re-invented. There were several figures in Slovakia who could have aspired to escape Mečiarist isolationism on the way to Europe.

The mythical role of Milan Rastislav Štefánik (1880–1919), the co-founder of Czechoslovak Republic in 1918 who died too early to play a more important role, was insufficient. Due to the rather autocratic profile of Andrej Hlinka (1864–1938), the leader of the most popular Slovak party of inter-war Czechoslovakia who had also been re-invented by Slovak nationalists due to his illiberal and xenophobic attitudes, meant that a better candidate had to be found for the Slovak “return to Europe.”

The most controversial symbol of post-socialist Slovakia who might have played the role as the leading symbol for Slovak nationalists was the head of the Second World War era Slovak Republic, the Catholic priest Jozef Tiso (1887–1947), later hanged as a war criminal. The coalition party under Mečiarism and some circles of Christian Democrats initiated attempts to legitimize the legacy of Tiso’s politics, something witnessed especially in the Slovak National Party. This would have entirely compromised not only the Slovak successor status after Czechoslovakia, but also the democratic orientation of the new regime. Tiso was the president of the state against which the Slovak National Uprising (1944) fought, and currently only neo-fascist and radical nationalist groups commemorate him. Elected to be the leader of the Peoples’ Party after Andrej Hlinka’s death, Tiso’s political fate further compromised the legacy of national populism within the autocratic *ľudácke* (peoples’) movement—the only official political movement in the fascist Slovak state under Nazi tutelage.

The two other leading personalities of twentieth century Slovak politics were the leader of Prague Spring Alexander Dubček (1921–1992) and Gustáv Husák (1913–1991), the latter being originally an anti-fascist leader and one of the most prominent victims of Stalinism and later the president of communist Czechoslovakia, as well as the symbol of the so-

called normalization period. Both figures were compromised by being communists and both passed away too recently to be successfully brought into the European case. Although Dubček was used as the symbolic co-founder of the post-socialist social democracy, the only available high-profile person who could have fit in to the Slovak “return to Europe” image was Milan Hodža (1878–1944). Known for his moderate autonomist orientation in unitary Czechoslovakia, he could not be too easily dismissed by the followers of Slovak nationalism.

As the News Agency of the Slovak Republic (TASR) announced on 23 June 2002, a delegation from the Ministry of Culture of the Slovak Republic landed in Chicago with intentions of unearthing the remains of Milan Hodža. Removing the remains of the former Czechoslovak prime minister, buried in the US as a war exile at the Czech national cemetery in 1944, was the idea of Prime Minister Mikuláš Dzurinda.

Two days later (25 June 2002), the same Agency reported from the city of Martin, Central Slovakia.¹⁸ According to reports, the coffin with the remains of Slovak statesman Dr. Milan Hodža was brought to the city at approximately 7 pm. On Wednesday from 10 am to 6 pm, the coffin was displayed for the public in the Lutheran Church at Memorandové Square.¹⁹ The honorary guard consisted of students from the Bilingual Gymnasium in Sučany, Hodža’s native town. At the entrance of the church lay a condolence book where visitors could write their statements. City policemen had patrols around the church until Thursday morning. A reverent ceremony of reposing the remains had been expected to take place on Thursday at the National Ceremony. The Prime Minister Mikuláš Dzurinda, who initiated the idea of the reburial, was expected to take part in the ceremony.

On 26 June 2002, the Slovak News Agency covered the actual reburial ceremony accounting that, “The interest of the public to pay tribute to the memory of the important Slovak statesman Dr. Milan Hodža was well beyond expectations. For the first two hours the coffin with the remains were exhibited and the condolence book signed by 250 people, although many more attended who did not sign in. According to the municipal rep-

¹⁸ Martin (*Turčiansky Svätý Martin*) is considered to be the cradle of the Slovak national idea in the nineteenth century. The Slovak National Cemetery (*Národný cintorín*) is located in this city and most prominent Slovak public figures have been buried in it since the end of the nineteenth century.

¹⁹ The central *Memorandové námestie* (square) is named after 1861 Slovak National Assembly that took place in Martin. Its major aim was to defend Slovak language and Slovak associations in that time Kingdom of Hungary.

representative, the high interest of the locals showed that the regional public keeps the traditions of democratic politics and its representatives in high esteem.” The report also noted good media coverage of the event. According to the news team, the coffin with the remains of Dr. Hodža was veiled with the flag of the Slovak Republic and displayed to the public until 6 pm. The coffin was decorated with flower garlands in Slovak tricolor donated by the Prime Minister Mikuláš Dzurinda and the representatives of the city of Martin.

Two years later, on 22 June 2004, Martin initiated the premiere of an educational play for students dedicated to the memory of Milan Hodža. On the theatre curtain there was an advertisement of a watchmaker with the slogan “Improve Your Time.” The next day a documentary film on Hodža’s removal to the fatherland was presented. In the evening the same play was presented for invited guests in the theatre. The play was part of the opening of Milan Hodža Days, a new regional tradition. After the play, Hodža’s American grandson made a speech. Also Slovak representatives from Vojvodina, Serbia, whose great-grand fathers once elected Hodža to the parliament when its capital was Budapest, were present and received the bust of the famous statesman. The prime minister spoke about the important Slovak statesman and about the debt owed to Hodža that was needed to be repaid by contemporaries. He also reminded the audience about the upcoming entry of Slovakia into the EU and NATO that provided for the modernization of the “Slovak homeland.” “If Hodža were looking at us,” said the Prime Minister Dzurinda, “he would have a good feeling when realizing that Slovaks have become a self-confident nation.”²⁰ At the reception that followed, a folk band played folk songs and Slovak wines were served. Other speeches that evening discussed the foundation of a new political tradition. According to these ideas exchanged among the participants in the foyer, Slovakia “was reviving its true history.”

Historian Pavol Lukáč underlined that “despite the unique personality of Milan Hodža, his name seems to disappear entirely from the historical memory of Slovaks ... So it is to be hoped that the symbolic act of his remains removal fulfils its mission and Slovaks finally also discover this unique personality.” Whoever was present at the festivities in Martin may have acquired the feeling that by re-burying Hodža and by the town’s following annual commemorative celebrations, change began in the realm of Slovak national commemorations. According to the logic of the partici-

²⁰ Participant observation of the author.

pants, Slovakia was about to begin to accept its “success story” in a united Europe.²¹ At the beginning of this success story, the interwar statesman fit the European format.

Why is it then that behind the walls of the Slovak Chamber Theater in Martin most Slovaks have not learned much about this European message of Milan Hodža? How is it possible that in spite of the country’s well-designed “success story” prepared by liberal intellectuals, Milan Hodža has not become a national hero? Why has Milan Hodža remained somewhat unknown in Slovakia even though the state media covered his reburial in detail, and the ritual received the attention of the highest political circles in the country including the most successful prime minister of the post-1989 period, Mikuláš Dzurinda (1998–2006), who identified with the pan-European idea of a former Czechoslovak prime minister? How do we explain the amnesia of the members of Parliament in September and October 2007 when they passed the law commemorating the remains of the symbolic adversary of Hodža, namely Andrej Hlinka? Why did Slovak intellectuals and publicists mention Hodža only in a handful of articles? Why is it that Andrej Hlinka, the political contemporary of Hodža who never achieved the Europe-wide reputation of Hodža, became such a highly commemorated personality while Hodža, who was politically equally as successful as Hlinka, did not make it into post-socialist political battles?

The explanation why Hodža has remained such a relatively unknown politician in present-day Slovakia might start from the fact that he did not die as a martyr. After Andrej Hlinka died in 1938, his name was used for the legitimization of the pro-fascist Slovak Republic (1939–1945), and the only party of wartime Slovakia was renamed after him (from Slovak People’s Party into Hlinka’s Slovak People’s Party). In addition, Hodža’s name was almost entirely erased from Czechoslovak socialist textbooks while Andrej Hlinka remained in them, even during the period of the communist regime’s most stringent re-writing of modern history. Being presented as an example of a reactionary politician unfriendly to socialism, Hlinka was more easily revived as the anti-communist symbol after 1989.

Hlinka also survived communism as *otec národa* (father of the nation) thanks to Roman Catholic preaching and confessionals, as well as the

²¹ Among the influential disseminators of the Slovak success story on the way to Europe, Martin Bútora, former Ambassador of the Slovak Republic in Washington, DC and an influential Slovak intellectual, is considered most significant also with regard to reburial of Milan Hodža remains.

stories that Catholic grandmothers narrated to their socialist grandsons and granddaughters. For these grandmothers, the war period seemed to be relatively stable and affluent, especially since they were themselves young at that time and lived in the allied state of Nazi Germany. The popular memories about wartime Slovakia, especially among Roman Catholic Slovaks, have remained rather positive also due to *aryanization*—the state-legitimized appropriation of property belonging to former citizens of Jewish origin who had been expelled to death camps. A similar “amnesia” was observed in Austria with regard to participation of ordinary Austrians in the Nazi army following the *Anschluss*. Andre Gingrich showed that although xenophobia and racism vanished from the official political language, the emotional continuation of nationalism remained concealed behind the official discourse.²²

Andrej Hlinka himself was known for having a particularly intolerant attitude toward Jews and Lutherans. He was famous for claiming to make Slovakia “white” as opposed to “red,” as Social Democrats and Communists supposedly promoted. Hlinka’s mausoleum was erected in the city of Ružomberok in 1941–1944, and people would visit it during the socialist era. Also, the nationalist period of post-1989 represented the time when Hlinka was more suitable for use by the nationalist power-holders, as he was more easily identifiable with the Slovak independence cause compared to the rather moderate autonomist Hodža. The provincial Czechoslovak politician died early enough (1938) not to be directly connected with his followers in the Slovak People’s Party such as his intellectually more advanced successor, party leader, and the head of state, Jozef Tiso. Hlinka was simply more suitable to play the role of a symbol for ordinary voters than was Hodža, who emigrated to the West before the war.

The confessional element differentiated the legacy of Hlinka and Hodža on its own. While Hodža comes from a family of Lutheran priests and teachers, his credo has not been dominant in the Habsburg lands since the end of the seventeenth century. Hlinka, however, best fits the image of the priest-politician in the predominantly Catholic and agrarian regions of Eastern Europe. Being Protestant in Slovakia usually also meant being closer to the idea of the Czechoslovak state. Because Prime Minister Hodža was not of the dominant confession, he was not the strongest symbol for an independent Slovakia that sought to distance itself from the Czechoslovak secular project. From this perspective, the transfer of

²² A. Gingrich, “Concepts of Race Vanishing, Movements of Racism Rising? Global Issues and Austrian Ethnography,” *Ethnos* 69, 2 (2004): 156–176.

Hodža's remains in 2002 in the state airplane made in Soviet Union and inherited from the Czechoslovak Federation, along with the draping of the coffin in a flag reminiscent of the Slovak Republic (1939–1945)—which with some changes became the national flag of independent Slovakia after 1993—might have been perceived with ambivalence. While in office, Hodža had never seen the flag that covered his coffin in 2002. Also, the soldiers who guarded his coffin wore uniforms that were different from those Hodža used to see while in office. The national anthem that was played during his state reburial would have sounded strange to him, as it was played only from the middle to the end (only the second part of the once common Czechoslovak national anthem remained to serve as the Slovak national anthem).

The aim of Hodža's reburial was to show Slovakia's European face. A tradition of Slovak politics relying on a pro-Western, rather than a Slavophile (pro-Russian) orientation, should have strengthened this mission. The reburial took place shortly before Slovakia entered the EU in May 2004. The political forces, led by Prime Minister Mikuláš Dzurinda, defeated Vladimír Mečiar's autocratic style of politics in 1998, especially on the issue of "returning to Europe" and away from his nationalist isolation. The legitimization made by Mikuláš Dzurinda via Milan Hodža's reburial therefore strengthened the project of Slovakia's EU integration.

Despite the already mentioned strength of the "popular" image of Hlinka at the expense of the image of Hodža, I argue further that by explaining the contrasting successes of the two leading symbols we need to move beyond the symbolic politics. The fact that people did not identify as strongly with the picture of Milan Hodža as they did with the image of Andrej Hlinka depends on the social organization of post-socialist politics in Slovakia and Eastern Europe. Hodža's corpse was not re-buried with respect to the taste of the post-socialist ordinary voter, but rather according to the preference of the intellectual liberal elite. Furthermore, the major deficiency was the insufficient use of the progressive and emancipatory side of Milan Hodža's agrarian populism, as opposed to Hlinka's integral national populism with strong authoritarian tendencies.

Populism as a Democratic Program

Inspired by Herderian romantic nationalism and aiming to modernize under-developed societies, East European populism began to grow at the beginning of the twentieth century. It was embodied in the ideology of

peasantism, which emerged intellectually as reactions to both Russian populism and Western socialism.²³ As Ghiță Ionescu writes, peasantism took the peasant explicitly as its social prototype and proposed molding the society and its state according to the peasants' conceptions of work, property, and administration. Additionally, peasantism blended its social-economic doctrines with a strong nationalistic concern for the emancipation of the "people" from foreign domination. Moreover, it claimed that the peasantry was entitled, as a class, to take on the leadership of political society, "not only on account of its electoral preponderance but also because of its innate spiritual and national values."²⁴ If taken from a wider perspective, the populist movement was the major democratization force in an agrarian Eastern Europe undergoing modernization. Peasant populism was on the agenda of nearly all political parties of inter-war Eastern Europe, especially before the wave of autocracies caused it to wither away. An essential feature of the populist ideologies was the call for the return to national roots, agrarian morality, and social justice that was allegedly destroyed by modern capitalism.

As elsewhere in Eastern Europe, Czechoslovakian peasant populism was embodied in the agenda of agrarian parties. The leading party in this field was the Slovak Peoples' Party led by Andrej Hlinka, who was active in Hungarian and later Czechoslovak politics starting at the beginning of the twentieth century. Milan Hodža was present in popular and high politics, having held a privileged position in the Belvedere circles of the successor to the Habsburg throne, Franz Ferdinand d'Este, assassinated in 1914 in Sarajevo. He belonged to the second largest political movement of inter-war Slovakia, the Czechoslovak Agrarian Party. As it was not possible to feed their politics from different sources—the agrarian nature of Slovak society did not allow much differentiation—both Hlinka and Hodža competed for the same type of voters with minor exceptions; Hodža, for example, enjoyed higher levels of support among Protestants and upper level peasants. It is an irony that while Hlinka's popular (and populist) face has remained dominant in Slovak politics up to the present day, having even been named, "Father of the nation," it is Milan Hodža, the son of a Protestant priest, who is now presented as the visitor of cosmopolitan salons of Europe, a foreign policy thinker, and thus someone who does not enjoy this strong patriarchal association.

²³ G. Ionescu and E. Gellner, eds., *Populism: Its Meanings and National Characteristics* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicholson, 1969).

²⁴ G. Ionescu, "Eastern Europe," in *Populism*, eds. Ionescu and Gellner, 99.

The *Republikánská strana zemedelského a maloroľníckeho ľudu*, the official name of the Czechoslovak Agrarian Party, whose most important representative in Slovakia was Milan Hodža, became the strongest party in the political system of the Czechoslovak Republic. It benefited from its position as a Czechoslovak party in the unitary state. Contrary to the Czech lands where it benefited from the support of larger estates owners, the Agrarian Party began to develop in two factions in Slovakia. The first belonged to the efficient activity of Milan Hodža and his followers, who established local peasant associations and promised policies of land reform that attracted smaller peasants. The second faction, represented by Vavro Šrobár and his group, aimed at establishing the Agrarian Party from above as a state ruling party, thus offering benefits to the leaders, participating in power.²⁵ With regard to the social structure, the voters of the Agrarian Party were small peasants (up to five hectares), but the decisive category consisted of medium and large landowners. The wealthy landowners dominated mostly in the Czech lands, as there were no large landowners in former Upper Hungary of Slovak origin after 1918. The land-owning upper class was supplied by Hungarians, and a large proportion of the land belonged to the Catholic Church. In addition to craftsmen and tradesmen, the special feature of the Slovak wing of the Agrarian Party was the significant number of intelligentsia in their ranks. As Vladimír Zuberec argues, the reason was the pro-regime orientation of the party and its frequent participation in the government coalitions.²⁶ This powerful position also enabled the Agrarian Party to gain the potential for significant modernization.

One of the major ideologues of the party was the founder of sociology in Slovakia, Anton Štefánek (1877–1964), who also shortly served as a Czechoslovak minister of education. The key program principle of the Agrarian Party was the land reform and the support of the cooperative movement. The agrarian program also paid attention to the work conditions of agricultural workers, including support for a higher level of social care as well as the defense of workers' rights. The basic feature of the agrarian program in the Slovak part of Czechoslovakia was to create *stredný stav* (i.e. a middle class).²⁷ In Slovakia the middle class consisted of richer peasants, state employees, and the intelligentsia.

²⁵ V. Zuberec, "Republikánska strana zemedelského a maloroľníckeho ľudu" in *Politické strany na Slovensku 1860-1989*, ed. Ľ. Lipták (Bratislava: Archa, 1992), 134–135.

²⁶ Ibid, 136.

²⁷ Ibid, 140.

Although in the later years of his career, he served as a prime minister (1935–1938) and minister of foreign affairs (1935–1936), Milan Hodža was not only one of political leaders of the Agrarian Party, but also a philosopher. His concept of federation in Central Europe, the base of which had been set up by establishing the so-called “green international”—the movement of peasant parties—in Prague, was envisioned co-operation of East European agrarian states.²⁸ Being a modernist, however, Hodža also served as minister of education (1926–1929) and twice served as minister of agriculture (1922–1925 and 1932–1934). The key question that needs to be answered is why Milan Hodža’s heritage is rather unknown among ordinary Slovaks and what makes the provincial Central European politician Andrej Hlinka special enough for a law to be passed honoring his role in Slovak politics.

Andrej Hlinka Law

Since 1989 streets and squares have been renamed after Andrej Hlinka in nearly every Slovak city. A new memorial dedicated to Hlinka was erected in the capital Bratislava. The law on the merit of Andrej Hlinka for state-creating (sic!) Slovak nation and the Slovak Republic no. 521/2007 (*Zákon o zásluhách Andreja Hlinku o štátoptvorný slovenský národ a o Slovenskú republiku č. 531/2007 Z.z*) was passed in the National Council of the Slovak Republic in autumn 2007, almost seventy years after Hlinka’s death and one day before the one hundredth anniversary of the tragedy in Černová. On the same day parliamentarians also passed a separate declaration about the Černová tragedy. On 27 October 1907, fifteen peasants defending Hlinka who was about to consecrate the church in his native village were killed by the police patrol from nearby Liptovský Mikuláš. The most tragic criminal act of the Hungarian state against Slovak peasants received wide resonance in Europe and became one of the cornerstones of anti-Hungarian sentiment in Slovakia in the following years, as well as the universal weapon of Slovak nationalists against Hungarians ever since.

The *Lex Hlinka* states that, “Andrej Hlinka has exceptionally contributed to the Slovaks becoming a state-creating (*štátoptvorný*) nation. As a

²⁸ As a proponent of regional integration, Hodža was also famous for his attempts to establish the democratic federation of Central European states as a solution to the increasing dominance of European powers in inter-war Europe whose ideas were presented in *Federation in Central Europe*, published in 1942 in English.

sign of appreciation, the bust and commemorating plate will be installed in the building of the National Council of the Slovak Republic.”²⁹ The law also states that the Mausoleum of Andrej Hlinka in the city of Ružomberok, where he was born and served as a priest for nearly all his life, is a reverent place and the visitors to this place should behave there with according piety.

The original proposal by the nationalist Slovak National Party was modified in the parliament with some of the paragraphs erased. For example, the title “Father of the nation” did not become recognized. Also the defamation of Hlinka’s name was not qualified as a crime. With the exception of the party representing the Hungarian minority and some female representatives of the centre-right party of former Prime Minister Dzurinda—the politician who first used Milan Hodža’s legacy for legitimizing his position—the law was passed jointly thanks to parliamentarians of the then governing and nominally social democratic SMER (*Smer* means direction in Slovak) of Róbert Fico and his coalition partners, Vladimír Mečiar’s Movement for Democratic Slovakia, Ján Slota’s Slovak National Party, the Christian Democratic Movement, and the major part of the Slovak Democratic and Christian Union of Mikuláš Dzurinda. The Slovak parliamentarians discussed a rather accurate explanation of the tragedy in Černová, delivered by a member of parliament from the opposition Hungarian Coalition Party. He indicated that the massacre represented a failure at that time by state institutions, rather than a conscious act of the state against its citizens of Slovak origin. Slovak nationalist politicians called this opinion, which was discussed in Slovak liberal circles as the most feasible explanation of the historical event, a “provocation.”

Several renowned Slovak historians and the representatives of the Lutheran Church and Jewish associations argued that Hlinka expressed derogatory and intolerant opinions about non-Catholics, especially Lutherans and Jews, and protested against the passing of *Lex Hlinka*. The alternative community of nationalist historians glorifying the regime of the Slovak Republic (1939–1945) ostensibly defended the importance of Hlinka’s law. In 2000, a similar law was passed commemorating the role of Milan Rastislav Štefánik for the Slovak nation within Czechoslovakia. There have also been plans to prepare a law commemorating Alexander Dubček, especially among the representatives of Social Democrats. None

²⁹ <http://www.zakonypreludi.sk/zz/2007-531> (accessed January 17, 2015). Translation by the author.

of those plans, however, reached the symbolic importance of the discussions about the law on the merit of Andrej Hlinka for state-creating (sic!) Slovak nation and the Slovak Republic.

Based upon quantitative data detailing municipal and county election results in Slovakia, the sociologist Vladimír Krivý hypothesized that the success of national populist parties in the 1920s, 1930s, and 1990s was the result of the reproduction of long-term patterns of political behavior.³⁰ It seems that it is the construction of national identities, as well as structural features selectively reproduced from an agrarian era, nurtured by state-socialist economy, and broadly linked to the peasant family and the Catholic religion, that created the social basis for the success of illiberal populist mobilization in Eastern Europe today. Beyond that, I have argued that populism also emerges as a result of post-socialist transitional ruptures that have increased calls for a return to a harmonious past, by contrast to the actual insecurity of post-socialism.³¹ The support of authoritarian parties in the 1990s—such as Mečiar's Movement for Democratic Slovakia and the Slovak National Party, whose voters were predominantly taken over by Róbert Fico's SMER in 2010 and 2012—is strongest in the regions where Andrej Hlinka enjoyed major support in inter-war Czechoslovakia. This reproduction of some form of pre-war populism indicates that there should be more attention paid to the social and economic base of Slovak politics when it comes to symbolic political legitimization.

Simultaneously with the recent Europe-wide trend toward neo-liberal transformations and crises, East Central Europe has witnessed growing street radicalism and the success of right-wing and other radical parties.³² A neo-fascist movement has emerged and anti-Roma attacks have intensified especially in Hungary, and the Czech and Slovak Republics. As Béla Greskovits argues, conservative and nationalist parties are gaining ongoing success in all countries of the region, and centrist politics are moving towards radical appeals. Many voters are starting to blame the EU and its multicul-

³⁰ V. Krivý, V. Feglová, and D. Balko, *Slovensko a jeho regióny. Sociokultúrne súvislosti volebného správania* (Bratislava: Nadácia Médiá, 1996).

³¹ J. Buzalka, "Is Rural Populism on the Decline? Continuities and Changes in Twentieth-Century Central Europe—the Case of Slovakia," *Sussex European Institute Working Paper* (2004), 73.

³² For Western Europe see D. Holmes, *Integral Europe: Fast-Capitalism, Multiculturalism, Neofascism* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2000); V. Stolcke, "Talking Culture: New Boundaries, New Rhetorics of Exclusion in Europe," *Current Anthropology* 36 (1995): 1–24; M. Stewart, ed., *Gypsy "Menace": Populism and the new anti-Gypsy politics* (London: C. Hurst and Co., 2012).

tural policies for the decline. The dissatisfied are not only disadvantaged workers or peasants, but also middle-class citizens.³³ This trend might be observed through the politics of dead bodies in Slovakia. I recognized this as post-peasant populism that emerges from a strong sense of collective identities, legitimized by ideologies perceived as being based on tradition.³⁴ This populism is not about the peasantry; rather it can be seen as a type of modern, populist political culture based on a non-urban social structure and imagined ruralism. It is opposed to capitalist, cosmopolitan, as well as secular worldviews and life-styles, and it offers an alternative “moral” model for economic development. The symbolic battles over the heritage of Milan Hodža and Andrej Hlinka, and especially the fact that Hlinka is on the winning side when it comes to popular image, indicate that the road to liberal democracy and tolerant welfare society is far from direct in Slovakia.

Conclusion

By comparing the recent legitimization processes and drawing on the symbolic power of the two leading political figures of Slovak politics in inter-war Czechoslovakia, Andrej Hlinka and Milan Hodža, this chapter describes how the legacy of populist politicians has been used to strengthen the position of post-socialist leaders. The law commemorating Andrej Hlinka, as well as the accompanying discussion about the tragedy in Černová, indicated that nationally biased explanations of past events are still common among the political elites in Slovakia. Hodža’s reburial could not provoke as much emotion as the nationalist explanation of Hlinka’s role in the defense of the Slovak nation “against” Hungarian and Czechoslovak states. As the most prominent Catholic politician of the inter-war period, he can be used by Slovak political leaders regardless of their nominal party belonging. His Catholic “dead body,” and autocratic and illiberal legacy, seem to be more suitable for present-day political use than the bodies of nominal Lutherans or liberal and pro-democratic leaders such as Hodža and even Dubček.

The reburial of Milan Hodža in the National Cemetery in 2002 served as a newly resurrected legitimization symbol for democratic Slovak poli-

³³ B. Greskovits, “Is East-Central Europe Backsliding? Economic Woes and Political Disaffection,” *Journal of Democracy* 18, 4 (2007): 40–46.

³⁴ J. Buzalka, *Nation and Religion. The Politics of Commemoration in South-East Poland* (Berlin: Lit, 2007).

tics. Hodža's reburial represented the "return to democratic Europe," where most Slovaks felt they belong after the isolationist and authoritarian politics of Vladimír Mečiar. As the case of Hodža implies, under certain conditions the use of prominent dead bodies for present-day purposes might serve to legitimize specific forms of progressive, pro-European politics. The ongoing popularity of inter-war populist personalities such as Andrej Hlinka in the present-day symbolic battles of Slovak politics represents the bottom line resurrection of integrist politics to which even mainstream politicians are not immune.

The Non-Post-Communist Left in Hungary after 1989

*Diverging Paths of Leftist Criticism, Civil Activism,
and Radicalizing Constituency*

ÁGNES GAGYI

On October 7, 1989, the XIV Congress of the Hungarian Socialist Workers' Party (*Magyar Szocialista Munkáspárt*, MSZMP) decided to create its successor with a democratic constitution: the Hungarian Socialist Party (*Magyar Szocialista Párt*, MSZP). The "Worker" element from the old party's name was continued by a smaller faction of MSZMP, which refused to enter the new formation. This faction reorganized during the XIV Congress in December 1989 to become the Workers' Party. In the public perception, the Workers' Party remained connected with the communist dictatorship through its evident ideological attachments to it. The Socialist Party was also considered heir to the MSZMP, largely because it succeeded in transferring a significant part of the MSZMP's institutional infrastructure to the new party. As a contemporary joke summed up the distribution of MSZMP heritage among the two formations, the new Socialist Party got the capital, while the new Workers' Party, Marx. In Hungarian politics, the Socialists remained associated with the "Left," while the Workers' Party was with the "extreme Left." However, neither of the two parties covered leftist positions that would have paired social concerns with a claim for democracy. The Socialist Party remained an important player in the post-socialist political field, in government between 1994–1998, 2002–2006 and 2006–2010. Although it continued to use social accents in its communication, its basic line of policy was a Blairist one, with a strong austerity package in 1995 setting its image as the party of harsh economic reforms. The Workers' Party never succeeded in gaining power. They continued to raise a voice on social issues, which they coupled with an explicit nostalgic support of party-state socialism.

In this article I will look at attempts to formulate a political left in post-1989 Hungary *other than* these two parties.¹ According to the historical origin of these two parties, as well as their identification in Hungarian public understanding, I will refer to them as post-communist Left, and consequently other initiatives will be designated as non-post-communist Left. Individual connections between non-post-communist leftist initiatives and post-communist Left parties will be indicated case by case.

To differentiate the non-post-communist Left from other political initiatives with social accents, I will define the non-post-communist Left as a position that criticizes both the political *and* the economic right. Thus, extreme right groups with a social or anti-capitalist edge would not come under the term non-post-communist Left for being anti-democratic. Similarly, human rights groups or advocates of liberal welfare measures would not come under the term non-post-communist Left if they do not criticize economic liberalism. The latter case involves a significant organization of the contemporary Hungarian opposition, One Million for the Freedom of Press (Milla). Milla featured representatives of Roma, women or the poor on the stage of their demonstrations and mentioned workers' rights among its issues. Its priority, however, is political democracy. Its framework for coagulating these issues is a liberal understanding of democratic civil rights. In economic terms, it criticizes the local network of informal economic-political coalitions that corrupt the "European" workings of the country's economic and political life. So far, the Milla has not featured a critique of the neo-liberal model of the free market. For these reasons, the Milla will not be presented among the non-post-communist leftist initiatives, in spite of its close ties and cooperation with some of its members.

In Hungary, it has been a common gesture among non-post-communist leftist actors to perceive themselves as solitary and the non-post-communist Left as non-existent. However, leftist criticism and political activism have been present in Hungary ever since the change of regime in multiple, sometimes conflicting, forms. I will attempt to provide a broad presentation of the ideological profile and political alignments of those Hungarian political groups and intellectual figures, which produced the non-post-communist leftist criticism of the regime change and post-socialist Hungary, as well as engaged in political action on the lines of that criticism. Some intellectuals who have produced significant analytical works on post-socialist Hungary from a leftist perspective, such as Iván

¹ The article follows developments up to summer 2012.

Szelényi, József Böröcz, or Attila Melegh, will be omitted, since their work is not allied to any explicitly political project.

The most striking common characteristic of the non-post-communist Left from a broader perspective is the common and permanent diagnosis that post-socialist social processes, especially economic inequalities, threaten to emerge with the rise of a new extreme right. In the face of that diagnosis, these actors draw up their political program as an alternative to that threat. In presenting these groups, I make a rough differentiation between groups operating within a Marxist tradition and those outside this tradition. The distinction refers to whether the actors concerned rely on the historical tradition of Marxism in a wide sense, implying references—however critical—to the original Marxist notions of class and capital², or whether they consider Marxist theoretical tools inadequate for some reason, and try to work out some kind of alternative, often labeled as a “third way” or “twenty-first century” political solution. For the sake of the present discussion, it serves as a tool for a somewhat ordered presentation. It is not something inherent to the groups’ self-definition. The choice of this specific distinction seems motivated by the impression that the history of non-post-communist leftist political activism in Hungary consists, on the one hand, of political groups and intellectual figures who provide a class-based analysis and political program in line with the Marxist intellectual tradition, though are unable to gather any significant base for political action, and civil society groups and intellectuals on the other hand, who provide visible activism, but address the socially sensitive middle class rather than the disadvantaged strata and do not operate a class-based analytical language. In explaining those divergences, it is the aim of the paper to go beyond a simplistic notion of the “repression” of the Left. Along the fact that the post-socialist environment was generally hostile to leftist vocabularies, this paper will pay close attention to internal structures of the non-post-communist Left that have bred divergent paths of leftist criticism, civil society activism, and aims toward winning a radicalizing constituency.

² M. Burawoy, “Marxism after Communism,” *Theory and Society* 29 (2000): 151–174.

A Coherent Diagnosis: Non-post-communist Left vs. the Extreme Right

The advocacy of social concerns as a leftist element has not been clearly distributed across the Hungarian political left and right. In the early 1990s, the whole political spectrum was dominated by a liberal consensus, both in political and economic terms. With respect to the economy, all parties held a program of privatization and marketization. While the Liberals and the Socialists featured a social sensitivity rather in terms of recognition and identity politics, it was the centre-right party Hungarian Democratic Forum (*Magyar Demokrata Fórum*, MDF) that, within a Christian democratic framework, showed the most concern for economic deprivation. This emphasis within MDF was largely voiced by populist writer István Csurka, who, soon after the MDF came to power in 1990, became critical of his own party. He claimed that MDF had surrendered the interests of the nation to Western finance and Western markets. To accompany this claim, as will be explained below, Csurka added an anti-Semitic argument directed against the Liberal Party. Largely due to that argument, Csurka was expelled from MDF in 1993. He founded his own party with an extreme right orientation, called the Hungarian Justice and Life Party (*Magyar Igazság és Élet Pártja*, MIÉP). Along with the marginalization of the right-wing social concerns following Csurka's departure from MDF, another significant move of the mid-1990s that marginalized social concerns from mainstream politics was the austerity package introduced by Lajos Bokros, Minister of Finance in the Socialist Party, governing from 1994 in coalition with the Liberals. With the "Bokros package," the Socialists and the Liberals shifted to the position of rational modernizers, looking to the West, with little sympathy for social suffering. These two moves together produced a marginalization of social concerns in Hungarian politics that opened more space for alternative actors to voice those issues. Csurka's MIÉP and later the Movement for a Better Hungary (*Jobbik Magyarorszáért Mozgalom*, Jobbik) pushed into that space from an extreme right background. These changes reinforced the tendency within alternative actors leaning to the left to identify themselves against the extreme right, and to formulate their agenda as an alternative solution to the social problems raised by the extreme Right. This solidified into a strategy of identification that brought Marxist and third way circles together, probably closer than they might have been under other circumstances. The reason why both strands could be considered as being on the "left" is largely due to their common identification against the extreme Right, which corre-

sponded to a number of critical insights about the consensus of the Transition elites.

It was a widely shared assumption that the understanding of the regime change as a transition from dictatorship to political and economic freedom was flawed. Economic hardships brought about by the regime change were incorrectly named a worthy sacrifice, a due price for freedom. The regime change did not bring either political or economic democracy. In the process of the regime change, former influential groups succeeded in maintaining their positions, while the majority of citizens remained closed out of the political negotiations and did not have any significant influence upon the political process of the regime change. In the process of privatization and transition to free market capitalism, former influential groups managed to take advantage of the new situation, while less influential social strata not only met economic hardships like rising unemployment or inflation, but also started with an irrevocable disadvantage in the competition of “free” entrepreneurship.

The belief that integration into the European and world market would bring along a “catching up” with Western standards of living was also considered false across the entire spectrum. Instead of an unconditional opening of the markets, measures to protect and develop the local economy, and increase local control over basic resources should be introduced. Regarding EU accession and integration, these groups emphasized the importance of sovereignty and called for a collective protection of the interests of newly accessing states. They also gave voice to reservations against international treaties and multinational bodies such as GATS, the WTO or the IMF, as well as call for keeping political decisions over economic issues close to those affected by them.

Citizens disadvantaged by the new political and economic processes—the non-communist Left assumed—did not find their political representation among the ruling political formations after the regime change. In absence of a political movement that offered relevant solutions to the deficiencies of political and economic democracy, a “vacuum” in political representation provided an open stage for the extreme Right, the only political group willing to voice dissatisfaction with the new political and economic system.

The above statements remain a constant standpoint of the groups concerned, uttered from changing constellations of political positions. The solutions offered in contrast to that criticism are more divergent, as they are projected from different theoretical and ideological standpoints. Their common characteristic is that they imagine a redistribution of property

that gives more control to those who produce value, and a political system which brings decisions closer to the people affected by them. Control over property and control over political decisions are imagined by these groups as interlinked conditions of what might be concluded as a fuller economic and political democracy.

One that voiced that critique sharply during the years of the regime change was the Hungarian October Party, active between 1989 and 1991, and its intellectual leading figure, György Krassó. The Hungarian October Party contrasted the process of the regime change to what they conceived of as the real values of 1956: the independence of Hungary, universal welfare, and popular sovereignty. Due to its '56er roots, the party adhered to a strong line against communist dictatorship. György Krassó, himself a '56er revolutionary and dissident intellectual, died of a heart attack in 1991 after his party could not run in the parliamentary elections in 1990. After his death, members voted for the dissolution of the party.

A similar diagnosis was offered by the leftist political group, Left Alternative (*Baloldali Alternatíva*), leading it to accuse Krassó's party of right-wing reactionism for its attacks of communist symbols. Historian Tamás Krausz, an intellectual member of the group summed up their diagnosis retrospectively from 2006 in the following way:

For us it was unacceptable to sustain the type of capitalism that was being constructed here. It could be seen from the very start that (...) in our situation, a semi-peripheral capitalism for the majority of people will be much worse than the last twenty years of the previous regime. We saw that the new regime would provide more political democracy, but less social democracy, and it will sweep out all elements of economic democracy. This is what happened.³

In 2007, in an open letter written to prime minister Ferenc Gyurcsány of the MSZP entitled "Are we losing the path?," Krausz warned: "If the MSZP loses its social quality, extreme right populism will be resurrected from its decades-long sleep."⁴

Economist Erzsébet Szalai, a former reform economist and dissident who continued to do critical analysis of the regime change from a sociology of elites perspective, talked about the formation of a "political vacuum" around key questions of the regime change, with the extreme right

³ K. Szarka, *Az árral szemben. Beszélgetések Krausz Tamással* (Budapest: L'Harmattan, 2006), 129–133.

⁴ T. Krausz, "Nyílt level Gyurcsány Ferenc miniszterelnökhöz. Utat tévesztünk?," *Népszabadság*, May 6, 2007.

as the only candidate to fill the void. According to Szalai, after 1989 there had been no differences about economic liberalization and European and world market integration among Christian-conservatives, liberals and technocrats. In those conditions, she claims “it was almost natural for the extreme Right to make an appearance and occupy the vacuum abandoned by everyone else without resistance—they being the only ones to raise the basic issues, the alternatives facing the country.”⁵

Gábor Scheiring, member of parliament of the Green party Politics Can Be Different (*Lehet Más a Politika*, LMP) since 2010, was involved as a green and alter-globalist activist from the beginning of the 2000s. He wrote critically on the MSZP-SZDSZ government’s austerity measures and privatization. When the government makes redistribution decisions without any relevant social and political legitimacy, such as the GATS agreement, “it would be a major mistake to leave the indignation solely to MIÉP”, he warned.

Since 2010, as a prominent figure of his party, categorized as its “leftist” voice, Scheiring has been putting forward the aim he has formulated in the following way: “it is the task of the LMP to show that alter-globalism does not only belong to nationalists,”⁶ and to pronounce “that which so far has been pronounced solely by nationalist anti-globalism: that defenseless economic exposure hurts.”⁷

András Lányi, an influential eco-political thinker, criticized the process of the regime change as preserving the favorable positions of the former elite both in economy and politics. “From the grub of fictive state property, ‘ready-made’ private owners rolled out, and in the sphere that became known as the market, they continued pretty much the same bargaining practices they had done in the conditions of the planned economy,” he claimed.⁸ In his article “On the threat from the Right,” he wrote that post-socialist skinhead groups and István Csurka’s radicalism were a shame, but did not constitute a historical threat. “The historical threat consists in the year-long spiritual spoil of the democratic political powers [who]

⁵ E. Szalai, *Notes from Inside the Belly of the Whale*, in *Post-Socialism and Globalization* (Budapest: Új Mandátum, 1999).

⁶ G. Scheiring, “Európai struccpolitika és a periféria válsága,” scheiringgabor.blog.hu, March 5, 2012, http://scheiringgabor.blog.hu/2012/03/05/europai_struccpolitika_es_a_periferia_valsaga, accessed September 25, 2012.

⁷ G. Scheiring, “A gazdasági kiszolgáltatottság fája,” scheiringgabor.blog.hu, March 20, 2012, http://scheiringgabor.blog.hu/2012/03/20/a_gazdasagi_kiszolgáltatottsag_faj, accessed September 20, 2012.

⁸ A. Lányi, “Kifelé a—miből?” in *A másik köztársaság* (Budapest: Liget, 1993), 79.

failed to produce relevant answers, solutions and convincing arguments to the most burning issues of Hungarian society at the turn of the millennium.”⁹

The Non-post-communist Left Within the Marxist Tradition

This section presents the groups and intellectuals who operate with the vocabulary and theoretical background of the Marxist tradition. That condition designates contact with that tradition, but not necessarily a historical continuity of acting under its terms.

Anarchism

From 1988, several smaller waves of anarchist revivals followed one another, with the Budapest Anarchist Group consciously reaching back to the tradition of a group of the same name that had operated under the Hungarian Soviet Republic in 1919. A successor of the Budapest Anarchist Group, called the Budapest Anarchist Society, operated until 1998, and by public actions to promote the basic ideas of anarchism, gained some notability in Budapest, especially among students. Several young intellectuals of the liberal dissident circles produced essays and textbooks on the history of international and Hungarian anarchism.¹⁰ The newly emerging anarchist groups issued various fanzines and newsletters that contained manifestos, presentations of anarchist principles and historical figures. In 1999, a network initiative called A-Network was launched to bring together various groups that stood close to anarchist principles. At the moment of its founding, the A-Network's circles included green, animal and women's rights associations, the Left Alternative, the Humanist Movement, the Rainbow hippie movement and Budapest Anarchist Society. The Network did not exist for long, and the Budapest Anarchist Society left it even sooner. But with its members

⁹ A. Lányi, “A jobboldali veszélyről”, in *A másik köztársaság* (Budapest: Liget, 1993), 90.

¹⁰ G. Szoboszlai, *Anarchizmus és rendezőelvek* (Budapest: A Magyar Politikatudományi Társaság évkönyve, 1986); A. Bozóki, L. Seres, M. Sükösd, *Anarchizmus ma*, (Budapest: T-Twins, 1994); A. Bozóki and M. Sükösd, *Az anarchizmus elmélete és magyarországi története* (Budapest: Cserépfalvi 1994); A. Bozóki and M. Sükösd, eds, *Magyar anarchizmus* (Budapest: Balassi, 1998); Idem, *Az anarchizmus klasszikusai* (Budapest: Mundus Magyar Egyetemi Kiadó Kft, 2009).

joining the international alter-globalist movement, the A-Network was followed by a series of similar network initiatives, conceived in the framework of alter-globalism.

Workers' self-management

In the late 1980s, a variety of privatization concepts with social accents circulated, several of which included measures to offer control over state companies and their assets to those working in them, or to use privatization to shift property into the hands of citizens.¹¹ Of these, I will only present those coupled with some kind of political mobilization. Within the democratic opposition, the issue of workers' property as group property was present at the beginning, but later was left out, as the founders of the SZDSZ turned away from third way ideas of democratic socialism, linked to the heritage of István Bibó and aligned with economic and political liberalism.

A radical variant of leftist approaches to privatization was the introduction of workers' self-management and the dissolution of centralized state power together with centralized planned economy. One of those was Krassó's '56er Hungarian October Party, which also promoted Sándor Rácz, president of Greater Budapest Central Workers' Council in 1956, for presidency. Another political group that made efforts to enable workers' self-management and to produce a coherent ideological background for it, was the Left Alternative.

Left Alternative

The Left Alternative (*Baloldali Alternatíva*) was formed in 1988 as a Marxist intellectual group within the MSZMP, which identified itself as democratic socialist. Most of its members transferred to the MSZP in 1989, founded the Platform of Left Wing Grouping within its rows, and as intellectuals, continued to work in institutions within the Socialist Party's institutional system. Along with their strong connections to the post-communist party, Left Alternative's claim for both political and economic democracy, as well as their connections to new alter-globalist activism brought them close to the non-post-communist groups.

The initial call announced the basic principles of Left Alternative as "heir of those progressive spiritual, cultural and political movements,

¹¹ For an overview, see D. Stark, "Privatization in Hungary: From Plan to Market or from Plan to Clan?," *East European Politics and Societies* 4, no. 3 (Fall 1990): 351–392.

theories and values, which in the last two hundred years of European history have stepped up against the various forms of economic, political and cultural monopolies, inequalities, privileges, and thrived for social solidarity, equality, freedom and democracy.”¹² The group identified against both Stalinism (dictatorship carried out by a bureaucratic apparatus) and new conservatism (market liberalism). It opposed Hungary’s dependence on the Soviet Union, as well as on international loans. Its conception of the regime change was that political democratization should go hand in hand with economic democratization to the degree that power shall be held exclusively in the hands of self-managing communities. In that process, it imagined the role of the party as a self-limiting guide to the process and opposed the constitution of new parties on the ground that they would bring only political democratization based on representative delegation of power without economic democratization.

In terms of political alliances, the Left Alternative defined itself as independent, but it accepted its members as being part of existing political parties. Regarding their participation in the post-communist party, the members of Left Alternative maintain that originally, the MSZP was founded as a socialist, and not capitalist party; that they identify only with the Platform of Left Wing Grouping, and not with the whole party; and that under the political conditions in force in Hungary, the MSZP is the sole guarantee against the unimpeded rule of neo-liberalism or right-wing conservatism. In the words of Tamás Krausz, “the presence is tactical.”¹³ If critical intellectuals would contribute to the bringing down of the MSZP, the outcome would not contribute to “the rise of a better leftist party on its ruins, but to a process of further fragmentation on the left.”¹⁴

In 2009, an influential figure of Left Alternative, Tamás Krausz quit the MSZP, and founded a new, leftist political forum, called United Hungarian Left. His departure from the party instigated public attention, but the United Hungarian Left could not gather significantly more support than its predecessors. Krausz indicated his motivation to leave, saying that Ferenc Gyurcsány’s neo-liberal politics transformed the party irrevocably into a bourgeois liberal party. Krausz concluded that by shifting the burden of the economic crisis to the employed, the party has lost its social base, a significant part of it migrating to the extreme Right. The party

¹² “A Baloldali Alternatíva Egyesülés Felhívása,” 1988, <http://bal.hu/magyar/balt/%F6rt2.htm>, accessed December 31, 2012.

¹³ Szarka, *Az árral szemben*, 107.

¹⁴ Ibid.

structure was also changed in a direction that a socially oriented mass basis has no control over leadership. "Under the pressure of capital, the MSZP lost its social face." "It was a socialist party that I joined. It was in practice Gyurcsány who made the MSZP break with me," Krausz stated.¹⁵

In the early 1990s, the group saw the privatization process as decisive for the future economic and political influence of workers. Throughout the years of the regime change, it made efforts to establish workers' councils. Considering that only workers' collective property would provide a solid ground for self-management, while individual market shares would allow both property and control to shift out of workers' hands, Leftist Alternative also tried to support workers' collective property in political negotiations.

In February 1990, Left Alternative founded an organization called the National Alliance of Workers' Councils, conceived as an heir to the 1917–1919 and 1956 workers' councils. It was intended to serve workers' participation and control over company management, as well as inhibit profitable factory units or whole companies from being expropriated or sold to managers, company owners, or foreign capital. It aimed to create workers' property, as partial property in the first round and prioritized property in the long run. At the National Roundtable negotiations, the Left Alternative managed to include among the modifications to the Constitution that "the state recognizes the establishment of producers' self-management and local governments' property." However, in June 1990, after József Antall's party MDF won the first democratic elections, a workers' council leader allied to the MDF, Imre Palkovics, founded a new National Alliance of Workers' Councils. This organization, supported by the governing party, became the leading institution. Palkovics's Alliance, as well as the new alliance of "free trade unions" called LIGA, initiated by founders of the SZDSZ in 1988, accepted private property and a workers' share of stock as the single legitimate forms of privatization, which blocked the way for the Left Alternative's idea of collective property.

During the years of privatization, Left Alternative issued several calls and declarations, warning that the privatization process would result in the expropriation of value produced by workers, and the rationalizations following privatization would bring about mass unemployment. Throughout the 1990s, they continued to issue declarations regarding the state of the economy and other political issues, such as the NATO bombings in Yugoslavia. They continued to seek contact with a wider workers' constituency, as well as intellectual and civil society groups, with small success. At the

¹⁵ T. Krausz, "Good bye MSZP!," *Népszabadság*, April 7, 2009.

end of the decade, Left Alternative began to give support to the international alter-globalist movement, as well as cooperate with local groups in an alter-globalist framework. It opened a thematic orientation towards the green issue, and in 2002 it took part in the foundation of the Hungarian ATTAC.

In 2009, the newly established United Hungarian Left compiled a political program entitled “90 Degrees Turn,” intended to serve as a material for public debate. The program was a product of the intellectual circle of Left Alternative, the editors and authors of their journal *Eszmélet* (“Consciousness”). Continuing the tradition of Marxist analysis of modes of production, linked to Ferenc Tőkei, and world-systems analysis, linked to Tamás Szentés, from late socialism, *Eszmélet* continued to follow and analyze the processes of post-socialist transition since 1989. The program contained policy proposals to alleviate the social and economic effects of the crisis. Starting from the basic principles of democratic socialism, and identifying the economic crisis as a systemic crisis of capitalism, the program also acknowledged that a general shift from capitalism to socialism was not likely to occur in the near future. Under these circumstances, the program proposed measures to reinforce social self-protection and maintain the possibility of anti-capitalist systemic change. The two main conditions for that, proposed by the program, are a multi-sector economy, with the increasing weight of the public sector, and international cooperation.

The reception of the 90 Degrees Program, as well as the general intellectual work of the *Eszmélet* circle, remained very limited. In mainstream politics, this could be explained by a reluctance to consider Left Alternative’s political aims and its vocabulary. But neither the groups that identified with the alter-globalist Left in the 2000s, nor the groups that engaged in politics with leftist accents from 2010 onward, came to build on their results. The latter’s distance was in large part due to Left Alternative’s closeness to MSZP, which ruined their credibility in the eyes of young activists. For young activists sensitive to social issues, the austerity policies of MSZP, together with its adherence to power positions of MSZMP throughout the regime change, rendered the MSZP more as the enemy than the ally of the socially disadvantaged. Also, as will be explained later, the political taste and habitus of the new generation activists was formed in the tradition of dissident anti-politics and/or the new anarchist prefigurative politics of international alter-globalism. None of these traditions allowed for the clear separation between strategy and tactics as applied by Left Alternative. New groups evaluated Left Alternative’s closeness to MSZP as corruption and treason.

The difference in political habitus constituted a barrier of communication in itself. Left Alternative was critical of Stalinism, but stood close to what Krausz has called critical Leninism.¹⁶ This intellectual stance was coupled by a habitus that took a number of Leninist principles—such as hierarchy within the revolution, and the avant-garde role of the revolutionary elite—as evident. This behavior, natural among members of Left Alternative for historical reasons, struck new generation activists as dogmatic and authoritarian. While members of Left Alternative emphasized the importance of tradition for contemporary leftist thought, new generation activists associated the message and habitus of the Left Alternative with outdated and repressive party-state socialism—a feeling later confirmed by Left Alternative's closeness to MSZP. As a result, the political orientation of new generation leftist activists did not gain from a meaningful dialogue with the tradition conveyed by Left Alternative.

Gáspár Miklós Tamás

In the second half of the 1990s, Gáspár Miklós Tamás gradually took a leftist political turn, and engaged in the intellectual discussion of political and theoretical issues from a Marxist perspective with the same momentum and attitude he was known for in his liberal period.¹⁷ His overture towards Marxism was a further development on a complex trajectory of political positions throughout his life. As a starting point of that process, Tamás mentions his 1994 article entitled "Farewell to the Right."¹⁸ Since that article broke with the right-wing tradition represented by József Antall and the Hungarian Democratic Forum, Tamás moved on to criticize his former liberal stance from a social perspective, using, by the end of the 90s, a Marxist vocabulary. As his leftist turn was barely connected to Hungarian political groups, the present article does not deal with its causes or process.¹⁹ Once convinced of the relevance of Marxist analysis, Tamás began to collaborate with the *Eszmélet* circle and sought contact with trade unions. Throughout the years, he became a prominent leftist intellectual, as well as a prominent figure in demonstrations held on behalf

¹⁶ Szarka, *Az árral szemben*, 97.

¹⁷ See F. Laczó in this volume.

¹⁸ G.M. Tamás, "Az utak elváltak," *Népszabadság*, June 11, 2005; Idem, "Búcsú a jobboldaltól," *Világosság* 5–6 (1994): 70–71.

¹⁹ For one his reminiscences, see G.M. Tamás, "Provinciális, ostoba, népellenes szar," *Hírszerző*, <http://hu.indymedia.org/node/12543>, accessed September 18, 2012.

of social causes by various political actors. Unquestionably, he became the best known and internationally recognized figure of post-socialist left criticism in Hungary. However, in spite of his dense activity and organizational network, he did not become a political leader with a strong organizational base, nor did he develop a significant circle of disciples among the young political groups on the left.

G. M. Tamás' leftist criticism has mainly been expressed in the form of political essays, articles, and speeches. In accordance with those genres, its style and topic is formed in the tension between immediate reaction and universal frames of theory and value. His series of texts have consistently introduced the perspective and vocabulary of international leftist critical thought to the post-socialist Hungarian public sphere, as well as set forth specific constellations of Hungarian politics in their light. By means of those texts, G. M. Tamás became a symbolic figure, a local testament to the existence of a relevant and culturally refined international leftist tradition—including the existence of a relevant and culturally refined local heritage—and the idea that there is critical political thinking beyond the internal ruptures of contemporary Hungarian politics. His widely read and up-to-date knowledge of international developments, together with his agile style of debate have made him into a nerve-racking, but invulnerable opponent of more sullen authors of mainstream opinions. He is, thus, a solitary, but widely visible defender of the leftist position. Over the years, rather than a systematic analysis of Hungarian society, Tamás's work can be characterized as a recurring reminder of the political perspective of the critical Left, made from flexible viewpoints and positions, always linked to the context of the specific gesture of public speech. His general position on the regime change, post-socialist Hungary, and the wider context of world politics can be abstracted from his works, despite a risk of generalizing situated assertions.

Regarding state socialism, Tamás prefers to use the term "state capitalism," arguing that like market capitalism, it was a system based on wage labor, the separation of labor and capital, and the distribution of labor and social privileges. The sole difference was that the main proprietor was the state. The regime change, contrary to dissident ideas of general welfare and participative politics, brought an economic breakdown and fall of living standards for the majority, in line with, but harsher than the results of neo-liberal reforms throughout the West, with no leftist power countering the dominance of old elites and international capital.²⁰ Tamás de-

²⁰ Ibid.

scribes the main political cleavage in post-socialist Hungary as neo-conservative parties, “representing the global capitalist wing of the dominant forces,” featuring on the left—having in mind MSZP, but also the Alliance of Free Democrats (*Szabad Demokraták Szövetsége*, SZDSZ)—and a national conservative right, giving voice to “the middle class against the underclass [over diminishing state resources] and against the crisis, which is conceived as a conspiracy from abroad, as something imposed on us by the west, by the plutocratic, cosmopolitan, anti-Hungarian (...) global order.” In those lines, he explains the unorthodox measures of the present Fidesz government as an organic result of the regime change and Hungary’s integration into a neo-liberalizing global economy.²¹

Against that picture, Tamás contrasts “the two hundred year-old idea of socialism” as a free classless society.²² Identifying the global economic crisis as inherent to the capitalist system, and social democracy as a chapter in the history of the world economy irrevocably closed by the global sweep of neo-liberalism, Tamás’s political idea is to aim no lower than a systemic transition to socialism. “Dear János, why should the world stop where our wearied generation has stopped? We failed. I don’t want to embellish that. I quit. But there is no world outside the world, so it is only one solution that remains: revolution,” he says to conclude the first piece of his famous debate with dissident colleague, János Kis, in the mid-2000s—a public statement of their political differences.

The Tamás-Kis debate, a symbolic mark of separating paths itself, reveals the root of their disagreement rather deeply, in spite of the massive rhetorical power of the discussants, and the historical irony that Kis, a former professional commentator on Marx, speaks against Marxism, and Tamás, a former challenger of social democratic ideas from a neo-liberal standpoint, speaks against economic liberalism. The debate was sparked when Tamás wrote a reaction to Kis’ article on the 25th anniversary of Solidarity. In his text, Kis, balancing the costs and gains of the 1989 regime change, arrives at the conclusion that despite the social plight brought forth by the economic downturn, massive unemployment, and the weakening of social security, the regime change has succeeded in what has to be acknowledged as its most important result: the widening of political and civic rights. Along that line, he argues that Solidarity should be praised for its sober undertaking of the necessary pains of transition to

²¹ G.M. Tamás, “Schmitt Pál bukására,” *HVG*, April 2, 2012, http://hvg.hu/velemeney/20120402_tgm_schmitt_bukas, accessed September 17, 2012.

²² Tamás, “Az utak elváltak.”

capitalism. Relying on the principles of liberal economic theory, Kis claims that human freedom cannot be achieved within the environment of state intervention. Accordingly, he claims that it was freedom that had to be rehabilitated first in 1989, and social suffering following the liberalized market remained to be attenuated through secondary measures of social policy.

Tamás, on the contrary, claims that, looking in the mirror of present economic and political oppression, 1989 has completely failed as a democratic revolution. First, he refuses to point to an alternative and merely states the necessity of a further struggle for the values of economic and political democracy. However, when attacked by Kis for calling people to a revolution without aims, he stops to elaborate on what he calls “the two hundred years old idea of socialism” and the criticism of neo-liberal principles that follow from it. He claims that human freedom remains bound to a free market system that is based on contractual relationships defined by previous property relations. In short, the emancipatory power of liberalism “stops at the factory gate.” Reacting to Kis’s argument that economic freedom should be prioritized, and its unfavorable results mended posthumously, Tamás continues by saying that to put the necessities of the market before its effects on people is an inadmissible legitimization of the suppressive workings of capitalism. In the debate, the contradictory presuppositions of economic liberalism and Marxism are most transparent here. Tamás continues by stating that from a really “democratic” perspective (defined in the above sense), the dictatorial system of state capitalism was just as indefensible as the present system of false democracy. The single way out is the abolition of capitalism, but until that is achieved, continuous work to soothe contemporary social pain is needed. In that respect, he leaves an open gate for collaboration with social liberals.²³

In the program he drew up in 2009 for the Green Left, a small party he presided over for a short period of time, he defines the party’s political aim accordingly: to work for both alleviating reforms and the transcendence of capitalism while cooperating with the European left and anti-capitalist movements. It is this program that he proposes in a regular manner to his readers and to any critical political initiative.

Of the newer leftist initiatives, the alter-globalist movement has been treated quite critically by Tamás. In an early article, reacting to the first

²³ J. Kis, “Szolidaritás huszonöt év után,” *Népszabadság*, August 27, 2005; Idem, “Szocializmus, kapitalizmus, politika,” *Népszabadság*, October 8, 2005; G.M. Tamás “Lassú válasz Kis Jánosnak,” *Népszabadság* October 1, 2005; Idem, “Az utak elváltak.”

public manifestation of the movement in the anti-WTO demonstrations in Prague, 2000, entitled “The Beauty and Pitfalls of Revolutionary Tourism,” he contrasts young alter-globalist revolutionaries to the historical tradition of socialism, and in that comparison, finds them undemanding. According to Tamás, they advance moderate claims to existing institutions instead of striving to change them, and enumerate historical achievements of social democracy as “radical” claims, instead of claims based on their own revolutionary philosophy.²⁴

One important thread of Tamás’ criticism of alter-globalism was that the movement based its argument on moral indignation. That kind of moral stance disregards the basic Marxist criticism according to which morals are grounded on existing power relations of economic production, and consequently, any existing moral system needs to be treated critically.²⁵ The difference between a liberal (Rousseauian) criticism of suffering and a Marxist analysis of the structural roots of that suffering—implying that a real leftist program cannot take as its base merely the moral or sentimental objection to pain—is a constant standpoint of the leftist tradition from which G. M. Tamás has been criticizing new leftist initiatives. So far, he has elicited no reaction on their part.

In 2002, with the formation of Hungarian ATTAC, Tamás took the position of its vice president. Throughout the 2000s, he maintained a connection with other Hungarian alter-globalist groups as well, lending them articles and speaking up at demonstrations. However, a strong organizational cooperation with them has not been established. Young alter-globalist activists looked at Tamás as an intellectual orientation point, but they kept a distance from him for Tamás’ political support for the MSZP-SZDSZ coalition (as a strategic choice against right-wing Fidesz) in 2006, his permissive opinion of prime minister Ferenc Gyurcsány at the time of nation-wide indignation with his “lie talk” in 2006, and his closeness to the ATTAC group involving members from Left Alternative, as well as the Workers’ Party. The lack of an effective dialogue between the leftist critical tradition conveyed by Tamás and the young alter-globalists’ self-identification marked another moment of discontinuity in the development of the non-post-communist Left.

²⁴ G.M. Tamás, “A forradalmi turisztika szépsége és buktatói,” *Magyar Narancs* 40 (2000), http://magyarnarancs.hu/publicisztika/http://magyarnarancs.hu/publicisztika/tamas_gaspar_miklos_a_forradalmi_turisztika_szepsege_es_buktatoi_praga_2000_szeptember_26-54386Tamás_gaspar_miklos_a_forradalmi_turisztika_szepsege_es_buktatoi_praga_2000_szeptember_26-54386, accessed September 18, 2012.

²⁵ See G.M. Tamás, “Telling the Truth about Class,” *Socialist Register* (2006): 228–268.

When the new eco-political party LMP was consolidated from the networks of the Hungarian green and alter-globalist movement, Tamás first described it harshly as a distinctly bourgeois party, criticizing the “gentrification” of the alter-globalist movement.²⁶ Ever since, keeping his distance, he sometimes approves of LMP’s socially inclined initiatives. He has been more amenable towards the newest political initiatives that gained momentum as opposition movements to the Fidesz government since 2011, in spite of the fact that they came from and built on a middle class base, as did the alter-globalist movement and the LMP. In summer 2011, Tamás wrote probably the most optimistic article in his series of leftist essays, entitled “The Beauty of the Struggle.”²⁷ Writing at a time when a new movement group, initiated by police and firemen’s trade union members, could be seen as promising to become a powerful member of the opposition movement coalition, Tamás wrote of the conglomerate of the new initiatives as Hungarian society’s organic self-defense, finally active after the long years of post-socialist numbness.

To take middle class political initiatives for the organic self-defense of society is a gesture of generalization that Tamás’ Marxist perspective commonly does not allow for. In a short public debate with one of the intellectual figures of the liberal opposition movement One Million for the Freedom of Press in Hungary (Milla), Tamás gave voice to his reservations regarding the Milla’s program. However, throughout the debate and since, he has been emphasizing his support for all opposition initiatives. In spite of that, a dialogue in which the basic points of his criticism would be talked over or reacted to by the new groups did not take place.

Non-post-communist Left outside the Marxist Tradition

All groups categorized in the present article as “non-post-communist Left” raise some criticism regarding the fact that the post-socialist order systematically produces social harm. However, there is a significant difference between the theoretical orientation of groups operating within the tradition of Marxist criticism, and those who turn to other, alternative political theories to express their concerns. That difference affects their strategies, coalitions, their repertoire of political action, and generally the solutions they project from the present situation.

²⁶ G.M. Tamás, “Provinciális, ostoba, népellenes szar.”

²⁷ G.M. Tamás, “A küzdelem szépsége,” *Élet és Irodalom*, July 22, 2011.

Erzsébet Szalai

The first intellectual to be mentioned under the non-Marxist heading stands in the middle between the two categories. In her diagnosis, Erzsébet Szalai relies on Marxist and neo-Marxist concepts. The reason for listing her with the non-Marxist category is that in the solutions she proposes, and the initiatives she recognizes as relevant to the situation, she follows alternative theories rather than classical class-based leftist criticism.

In the mid-1980s, Erzsébet Szalai, working as a reform economist at the Financial Research Institute of the Ministry of Finance, came into contact with the democratic opposition. She remembers the dialogue between dissidents and reform economists working in the Financial Research Institute as a phase of concordance between social democratic and liberal ideas, bridged by references to the third way social democratic tradition of István Bibó. However, in her latest recollections she sets off an inherent ideological conflict at that moment already.

Referring to two significant documents of the regime change process that appeared in 1987, the first edited by dissidents and the second by reform economists, she says:

Social Contract is Bibóist and neo-liberal at the same time. *Turnabout and Reform* proposes a liberal economic turn and a democratic political turn at the same time, without making clear the relationship between the two. The question how the democratization of the political system relates to market reform is neglected all the way, and I remember that when I tried to point out that market and democracy are not necessarily allies in every situation, I was told not to force the argument... Now I think that I was not to force that argument because, had that problem become a central question, it would have split the group into pieces.”²⁸

Szalai did not join SZDSZ when it was founded on the basis of the Network of Free Initiatives. She found the process of the party formation undemocratic, and in her views got further and further from what she saw as the SZDSZ getting rid of social commitments and turning liberal conservative. She describes her intellectual path as being a leftist liberal in the years of the regime change, then turning into a social democrat, and later, in the 2000s, to a “new leftist.”

Besides her connections with political initiatives, Szalai developed a circle of disciples, mainly through an alternative institution of debates on

²⁸ E. Szalai, “Oral history interjú” (unpublished interview with Béla Révész, June 13, 2006).

public issues, held in her home, called “Szalai saloon.” With many visitors of the Szalai saloon also active in various movement groups, and later in the LMP, this circle played a significant role in maintaining contact between new activist imagination and academic analysis. It also worked as a pedagogical environment that encouraged the use of leftist tools of analysis. That environment contributed to the formation of several critical young sociologists and economists, including economist, Gábor Scheiring, the LMP member of parliament.

Szalai’s work as a reform economist came under the stream of criticism that described the late Kádárist economy as captive to the partial interests and negotiations of several branches of the elite. From 1989 onward, she wrote of the regime change as determined by coalitions between former elites.²⁹ She claimed that in the late years of Kádáristism, a coalition had been formed between reform intellectuals working in the official reform institutions, the democratic opposition acting on the illegal borders of the system, and the late-Kádárist technocracy, interested in the broadening of market autonomy. From this coalition, technocrats expected an ideological legitimization from intellectuals, while reform intellectuals and the democratic opposition hoped for a reform process that would bring greater economic and political freedom.

Regarding that alliance, Szalai asks the question as to why intellectuals initially trained in Marxist theory did not perceive the ongoing process in class terms, and rather conceived of it in terms of social or civil autonomy, fused with the ideal of free market as a space of free and organic social activity: “Why did they interpret the revolution in Poland as a clash between civic society and the party state instead of a class conflict?”³⁰ Her answer: however much intellectuals identified their ideals with the general interests of society, their sole opportunity for inter-group coalition was with Kádárist technocracy. A public outreach, let alone to workers, was impossible and would have been severely punished, though in the bonds of a reformist coalition, the process of gaining small freedoms seemed a realistic path for social change.³¹

²⁹ E. Szalai, “The New Elite,” *Across Frontiers* 5, 3 (Fall-Winter 1999): 25-28; Idem, *Notes from Inside the Belly of the Whale*; Idem, “Elviselhetetlenül embertelen. Orbánék új gazdaságpolitikája,” interview with Gergely Csák, *168 Óra Online*, October 1, 2011, <http://www.168ora.hu/buxa/orbanek-uj-gazdasagpolitikaja-69872.html>, accessed September 18, 2012.

³⁰ Szalai, *Notes from Inside the Belly of the Whale*, 85

³¹ Ibid, 86–87.

Szalai criticizes the political ideals arising from that constellation for being blind to power relations between social groups:

On the one side is an increasingly civic society with its healthy endeavors, need for autonomy and readiness to learn. The other side is represented by a body of power which is alien to society. The complicated common relations between the two sides, the role of the interest groups of varying strength, the subjects and nature of economic power, the basic division of society in the interests of political and market reforms—all these issues are not taken into consideration by our heroes. They being conscious of these would weaken the movement's force, or demand more complex strategies and tactics.³²

Szalai's own attempts at understanding post-socialist Hungarian set forth a wider framework of what she called "new capitalism," and its alternative, "new socialism." Her diagnosis of the history of post-socialist elite coalitions is that late-Kádárist technocracy has been marginalized by international and emerging national capital. She assumes that throughout the 2000s, national capital shifted its support from a lightly socially oriented MSZP government (under Péter Medgyessy) toward neo-liberal governments under Ferenc Gyurcsány, and later Gordon Bajnai, and by 2010, to Viktor Orbán's Fidesz. Her diagnosis of Fidesz's economic policy is one of "Keynesianism turned upside down," which satisfies national capital in return for its support by privileges introduced through anti-democratic means.³³

Szalai's idea of the global processes in which Hungary is embedded stems from a Marxist analysis of neo-liberalism as a new phase of modern capitalism, with social and political barriers diminished by the interests of capital. From that ground, Szalai proceeds in a direction that is closer to social liberal criticisms of globalization. Szalai's conception of "new capitalism" refers not only to a process of neo-liberal globalization that pushes for institutionalized privileges of capital, but also to a new sort of global social organization, breeding new kinds of politics. As a basis for that new global social organization, she refers to the growing significance of knowledge and affection in the new global economy, a type of commodification that gives way to subversion at each moment when the same knowledge or affection is used for social, rather than market reasons. This argument relates closely to the general argument of the alter-globalist

³² Ibid, 87

³³ Szalai "Elviselhetetlenül embertelen;" Idem, "A laissez-faire-től a diktatúráig," *Népszabadság*, January 1, 2012.

movement, grounded in the work of post-modern operaist authors like Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, as well as in the theories of global “network” or “information society,” as articulated by Manuel Castells.

From that base, Szalai claims that new technological processes point towards the birth of a new socialism from the present state of new capitalism. “The essence of these processes lie in the growing significance of ‘knowledge as commodity’ and ‘affection as commodity:’ the interconnectedness of these in the dense new networks of knowledge and human relationships can result in the dissolution of ‘real’ knowledge (...) and affection, but also a growing demand for the latter—and their actual dominance.”³⁴ New socialism would be exactly the overflow of socially oriented networking, which would take over the logic of the market. The prominent actor of that shift is conceived of as a network of autonomous civil society actors, sometimes referred to by Szalai as the “young,” after Marcuse, with a paradigmatic example being green civil society groups reacting to global processes that harm their life world.

The above diagnosis met the self-definition of new alter-globalist groups quite closely. During the 2000s, a close connection between Szalai and those groups developed. Szalai wrote on the movement as a relevant solution to the problems identified by her analytical frame. Similar to other theories of global social resistance that developed in the late 1990s, Szalai evaluated the movement’s significance as reaching beyond its actual organizational and political capacities. It was a “model” of a positive global social change, predicted by her theory.³⁵ Szalai spoke at various events organized by Hungarian globalization-critical groups and figured as a general reference point for the intellectual legitimacy of the movement. Although she sometimes added to hopes in rising civil society that new socialism is not possible without a world-wide coalition of the working class, she accepted the new civil groups as (early) representatives of a general solution. Due to these conclusions, her close connection to new movement groups did not add Marxist criticism to the self-definition of newer groups, in spite of the fact that Szalai operates with Marxist theory in her work and considers herself as an intellectual with a Marxist background.

Szalai has also been connected to the *Eszmélet* circle and used to be member of the Hungarian ATTAC. However, she differentiates herself

³⁴ E. Szalai, *Az újkapitalizmus és ami utána jöhet* (Budapest: Új Mandátum, 2006), 129–130.

³⁵ E. Szalai, *Az első válaszkísérlet. A létezett szocializmus—és ami utána jön* (Budapest: Nemzeti Tankönyvkiadó, 2004), 114.

from old-style Marxists and Marxism by the difference of the solution she offers. "There is a group, one generation ahead of me, which tries to expropriate Marxism for itself, and rejects any attempt by younger people to renew or criticize those ideas."³⁶ At the same time, the more explicit she grew in her leftist orientation, the more the liberal circles with which she once shared the same platform excluded her. "[T]heir toughest and most commonly used weapon is often an aggressive silence," she complained as early as 1995.³⁷

When the LMP was formed, Szalai was one of the intellectuals invited to support the party, on the basis of her earlier contacts with alter-globalist and green activists. She spoke up in the series of public debates preparing the party's formation, but did not join the party, following the precedent of her decision at the SZDSZ's foundation to remain outside of parties and in the position of an independent intellectual. She has been critical of LMP's liberal orientation and pushed for a more socially oriented program. In 2012, with the occasion of LMP's initiative for a referendum on four social issues, she declared LMP to be very close to her own standpoint, both because of its social orientation, as well as its attempt to transcend the populist-urban dichotomy traditional to Hungarian politics. In Szalai's interpretation, the strategy of the LMP avoids the populist-urban dichotomy in rhetorical gestures, but sticks to a leftist orientation in practice.

András Lányi and Protect The Future

Although András Lányi declares his ecological politics to fall as far from the modernist notions of the "left" as from the "right," a presentation of his thought cannot be omitted, due to its deep influence upon the non-post-communist Hungarian Left. He has been an active member of the democratic opposition and the Network of Free Initiatives, written and edited *samizdat* publications, and organized the Danube Circle—known as the biggest opposition movement before the regime change. Additionally, he contributed to the fall of Horn Gyula's (socialist) government in 1998, was founder of ecopolitical NGO Protect The Future, which successfully proposed László Sólyom for the Presidency in 2005, as well as contributed to preventing the establishment of a NATO locator in the Mecsek national park. Finally, in 2006, Lányi founded an ecopolitical party called

³⁶ Szalai, "Oral history interjú."

³⁷ Szalai, *Notes from Inside the Belly of the Whale*.

Live Chain and was active as its president until 2010, when he retired from politics to academic work. As an intellectual, he wrote political essays as well as literature, worked as a film director, was founder of the video documentary workshop Black Box, and since the mid-1990s, has led a specialization at the Eötvös Loránt University in human ecology.

Lányi's idea of ecopolitics is defined by contrast to industrial modernization, its mechanic, individualistic character, and its macro institutionalization that brought forth twentieth century dictatorships. The basic character of that kind of modernization is that it subordinates complex and inter-related social and ecological processes to abstract ideologies of "progress," leading to the destruction of the former. This characteristic Lányi sees as inherent to all twentieth century ideologies, political and market liberalism, as well as to national socialism and communism. As global modernization has reached the verge of exhausting the natural resources it is based on, its continuation further threatens to instigate ecological and social catastrophe. The only way out of the process is "backwards:" towards slowing down modernist development, bringing economic production and consumption closer to the ecological circle, closer to locality and self-sufficiency, and bringing down macro-institutions of politics to subsidiary forms of local government in which every single member of the local community is competent.

This general picture of the green idea is assisted in Lányi's argument by a phenomenological, Heideggerian understanding of tradition, and of the way one's moral position and place in the world is produced in ways preceding individual rational thought. He also relies on Martin Buber's dialogical philosophy, and the Habermasian opposition between system and life-world. His ideal of a political community is one that, contrary to the "inhumanely rational order of the world," is based on the spontaneous, ongoing deliberation of its members over the final stake of politics: collective definition of values.³⁸ Any mechanic rupture of that organic political process inevitably leads to one-sidedness in moral values, enmity, aggression, and social and ecological injuries. Lányi's examples for such ruptures go from twentieth century dictatorships or Auschwitz as a model of social apocalypse, to grim descriptions of marketized social life and the dehumanizing effects of an oncoming ecological catastrophe.

Lányi thinks of East Central Europe as occupying a key historical position, from which the basic opposition between modernization and ecologi-

³⁸ A. Lányi, "A másik köztársaság—Szimbólumnyelv és értéktudat," in *A másik köztársaság*, 38.

cal locality has been easier to understand. He quotes Hungarian twentieth century “third way” political theorists (Karl Polányi, István Bibó, István Hajnal, László Németh) as precursors to the global ecological stream of understanding that dichotomy. “Ecological politics (...) understood from history that deep and lasting change always proceeds in small scale, in the interest of the small (István Hajnal), and in defense of the small circles of freedom (István Bibó). Not in the name of abstract ideals and planned futures. (...) In East-Central Europe, where forced modernization experiments were carried out in varying forms of dictatorship and free market competition, the cathartic effect of historical convulsions lead these authors to an original and deep understanding of the dilemmas of modernity. Their work touches exactly on those points which constitute the main questions for contemporary ecological politics.”³⁹

Lányi formulated his concerns in the face of Eastern European transition, reintegration in global market economy, and EU accession, along the ideas outlined above. He saw the project of “catching up” with Western modernization as threatening with inorganic applications of foreign models, similar to other historical projects of forced development, which promised greater economic and military potential for the price of temporary social sacrifice, but ended in fascist and Bolshevik dictatorships to manage the subordination of society to the priority of production. He saw the EU accession as threatening with an ever greater distance between political decision making and those affected by it. He also had suspicions that newly accessed Eastern European states would be treated as second class members of the EU. Consequently, he urged for a collective representation of interests by Eastern European states. Throughout the first half of the 2000s, Protect The Future gave voice to objections against international agreements and organizations such as GATS and the WTO, criticizing their undemocratic decision making process, as well as the socially and economically harmful effects of measures like the liberalization of the market of public services.

Such criticism of the EU or international organizations pushing for market liberalization were voiced in Hungarian public debates typically from extreme right positions, such as that of István Csurka. Lányi, his disciples, and the Protect The Future were often attacked for supporting the extreme right by their argumentation. In the public debates, traditional leftist arguments against the same processes, as voiced by G. M. Tamás or

³⁹ A. Lányi, “Az ököpolitika és a hagyomány,” *Ökotáj* 31–32 (2003), <http://www.okotaj.hu/szamok/31-32/ot31-12.htm>, accessed September 25, 2012.

the Eszmélet circle, were marginal and unheard. Lányi's strategy was more successful.

In Protect The Future, founded in 2000, Lányi brought together prestigious representatives of the green idea from conservative circles with young activists and professionals specializing in disciplines related to ecology. Protect The Future provided a working environment for young professionals to develop their intellectual training and career together with a political activity. During the 2000s, they produced a strong body of literature, including translations, textbooks, books, political essays, and newspaper articles. Through speaking a language of political criticism, unattached to any political camp in power, and by backing that criticism in a well-articulated and referenced ecological argumentation, Protect The Future accumulated a significant moral and intellectual prestige, making its position more visible in public debates than leftist critical intellectuals, especially among the educated young.

The way Protect The Future defined its political position was based on Lányi's idea of ecopolitics. "It's not power that we want to grasp, but people's imagination," the slogan of Protect The Future claimed, putting forth the aim to "put politics back in its place." Such a change was to be achieved from below, by a collective process of political revival that would take shape in the awakening of an active civil society. In this understanding, ecological politics was conceived as the paradigmatic form of civil society activism in general. The argument for this model role was that local activism over ecological issues happens exactly in those areas where the aggressive colonization by macro-institutions harms the tissue of local life-worlds.⁴⁰ Protect The Future was consistent in treating manifestations of ecological activism as signs of a broader process of civic awakening and a new kind of politics taking shape.⁴¹

Protect The Future declared its aim to be protecting the heritage of future generations, both ecological and social. This was an aim that they defined as representing universal interests of civic society, opposed to partial interests represented by political and economic power groups. A paradigmatic project of Protect The Future was to send a green ombudsman, representing the interest of the future generations, to Parliament in 2008. Alongside that, Protect The Future carried out several campaigns regarding urban development, environmental protection, the protection of

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ E.g. M. Vay, "Felkonf" in Idem, *Zengő—Ökológia, politika és társadalmi mozgalmak a Zengő-konfliktusban* (Budapest: Védegylet, 2005), 9–16, 10–12.

public services, and critical campaigns regarding EU accession and global economic processes.

Protect The Future and Lányi's ecopolitics, as the strongest voices critical of neo-liberal globalization outside the extreme Right, had a strong influence on the nascent alter-globalist movement in 2000s Hungary. Green NGOs, with Protect The Future in the vanguard, gave institutional help for the network of young alter-globalist activists, many of whom were also employed in their frameworks, in terms of room, internet access, financial help, as well as legal protection at times. In terms of ideology, Lányi's human ecology class, visited by many members of the alter-globalist network, introduced the ideas of theoreticians quoted by the alter-globalist movement, such as Beck, Castells, or Zygmunt Bauman. These theorists urged for a global civic society to step up against the harms caused by economic globalization, and put forth the examples of ecological activism as a model for this new civic society politics. From 2003 onwards, Protect The Future organized public debates on the topic of ecopolitics and criticism of globalization, to which they invited strong figures of the international alter-globalist movement, as well as Hungarian activist groups. These events functioned as main forums of Hungarian alter-globalism and defined criticism against neo-liberal globalization in an ecopolitical framework. Alter-globalism featured as part of that "politics beyond politics" proposed by Lányi, involving the reinstatement of politics as civic participation and deliberation over moral values.

Alter-globalist groups in the 2000s

By alter-globalist groups I refer to activist groups that defined themselves in relation to the international alter-globalist movement, which started with the 1999 demonstrations in Seattle against the WTO ministerial meeting. Due to their explicit connections to alter-globalist demonstrations, their criticism of neo-liberal policies, as well as of the international institutions enacting them, these groups were often categorized as "extreme Left" by mainstream journals and by the police.⁴² However, in the self-identification of Hungarian groups, besides the language of leftist criticism of neo-liberal capitalism spoken by Western European alter-globalism, the ecopolitical direction represented by Protect The Future played an important role.

⁴² *A Nemzetbiztonsági Hivatal 1999-es évkönyve* (Budapest: NBH, 2000); *A Nemzetbiztonsági Hivatal 2001-es évkönyve* (Budapest: NBH, 2002).

Alter-globalist activism in Hungary in the 2000s had two distinct branches. When the European institution of the international movement, the European Social Forum started its Expansion to the East programs in 2002, the first organizations to identify themselves as local representatives of the movement were Left Alternative and the ex-communist Workers' Party. These circles dominated the formation of the Hungarian ATTAC and Hungarian Social Forum, the two institutions that regularly served to centralize local alter-globalist movements and connect them at an international level. The closeness of ex-communists scared young alter-globalists away from these circles and blocked significant dialogue between the groups.

Young alter-globalists found support in various green NGOs, especially Protect The Future. These NGOs operated with an ideology of autonomous civic activism close to the alter-globalist ideals. After an official breakup with what they saw as the ex-communist appropriation of the movement's institutions, young alter-globalists continued to work in an informal network, relying largely on the infrastructure of green NGOs. Alongside institutional help, the green network also offered them the intellectual background and legitimacy of ecopolitics, often stepping up publicly to defend radical actions of alter-globalist groups as manifestations of "civil society." The Hungarian Indymedia, the official media of the movement was edited largely by an employee of Protect The Future, using their office and internet connection. The same network provided significant support to the Centrum squatters' group during their occupations in 2004–2005.

The general ideology of alter-globalism implied that the ever denser network of global interaction makes possible a new form of politics. While neo-liberal globalization shifts out of reach of traditional nation-state politics, networked coalitions of civil society can raise and constitute a counterforce to sheer economic interests, thus bringing forth global democracy. The movement placed the difference between the present social system and a revolutionary society into the present, by differentiating between the "autonomous" spaces of the movement and the dominant social structures outside. The movement was characterized by a strong sense of universality, as expressed in its slogan "we are everywhere." In the alter-globalist framework, just as in Lányi's ecopolitical one, any instance of civic activism could count as a sign of the whole movement, that is, global civil society, growing stronger. That correspondence, of course, was assisted by the fact that Lányi and his disciples from Protect The Future read and quoted many of the theorists quoted by the alter-globalist movement.

The closeness between the alter-globalist framework of universal civil society and the ecopolitical ideal of civil society made possible an ideological identification between the ecopolitical organizations and alter-globalist activism, in spite of the fact that hardcore alter-globalist groups, such as Centrum, identified themselves explicitly with the new anarchist tradition of alter-globalism,⁴³ and featured green issues as part of an eco-anarchism rather than ecopolitics.

Along these similarities, in the mid-2000s, ecopolitical and alter-globalist activism constituted a broad coalition, in which actions and campaigns were organized collaboratively, and actions were interpreted and communicated as the results of a civic awakening. Any results achieved by any group could be quoted as the collective achievement of an anonymous, organic civil society.

As the alter-globalist-ecopolitical activist coalition has been piling up significant amounts of public fame, by the mid-2000s, various members began to capitalize on the network's growing success and enter party politics. In 2005, Lányi founded the green party, Live Chain, with the intention of running in the 2006 elections. In reaction to this development, members of Protect The Future issued a press release in which they delimited themselves from Lányi, stating that "Protect The Future is not even informally the party of Live Chain." Their withdrawal of support hit hard on the chances of Life Chain and resulted in a break-up between Lányi and his earlier disciples at Protect The Future. In 2007, the same Protect The Future members who delimited themselves from Lányi's party, decided to found LMP. The LMP was conceived as the new civil society entering party politics. With the party's official debut in 2009, the "civic" coalition of ecopolitical and alter-globalist movements was definitively dissipated.

During its heyday, the ecopolitical-alterglobalist coalition defined its politics in a dichotomy between the worldly processes of everyday Hungarian politics and a universal solution, however yet transcendental to Hungarian reality. In the alter-globalist vocabulary, that was expressed by the concepts of autonomy vs. being part of the system, while in ecopolitics, the politics of interests and power vs. the authentic politics of deliberation over values. That kind of strict differentiation between the world of problems and the world of solutions resulted in a general neglect of concrete strategy directed to actual Hungarian society. The reflection on political strategy did not go beyond moral claims and "autonomous" or-

⁴³ See D. Graeber, "The New Anarchists," *New Left Review* 13 (January-February 2002): 61–75.

ganization. The lack of a structured ideology of political action, which would have dealt with the question of conflicts of interests, made itself felt in the organization of the LMP later.

Gábor Scheiring and the LMP

The party LMP was founded on the network of green organizations. Out of these organizations, those in Budapest were in close contact with the alter-globalist idea while those in the countryside stood closer to a right-wing conservative ideal of environmentalism. As the LMP was conceived as a “basic democratic” organization, the ideological differences present at its foundation did not crystallize later into any clear political orientation, but resulted in an ideological heterogeneity, implying elements from right-wing anti-capitalism through liberal concerns for human rights and social plight to left-wing anti-capitalism.

In a political climate strongly defined by the tension between positions of “right” and “left,” the LMP entered with a strong message of independence from both poles of the political spectrum. It voiced the ambition to represent the general dissatisfaction of civil society with the whole post-socialist political elite and acted as a “healing power.” In that sense, the party’s name, Politics Can Be Different, summed up the way it positioned itself within the Hungarian political field.

Referring to their party’s own political orientation, members of LMP often used the term ecopolitics, in order to differentiate themselves from existing “right” or “left” positions. One emphatic gesture to assert this approach, especially against the public claims that LMP is nothing but the reincarnation of old liberals/old communists, was to support the Fidesz’s initiative for a national holiday in the memory of the Trianon treaty.

The LMP did not abandon its neutral position even after the Fidesz won two-thirds in 2010. This was mainly due to the fact that many of its sections rejected any closeness to the official party of the “Left,” the Hungarian Socialist Party. Alongside LMP sections coming from right-wing environments, one of the political leaders, András Schiffer, was determined to keep a distance from the Socialist Party. Schiffer, coming from a family tradition within socialist politics, was involved in socialist youth organizing in the early 1990s. He later became active as a lawyer in the liberal human rights association Hungarian Civil Liberties Union and cooperated with Protect The Future on those grounds. Although it is from these grounds that he rejects collaboration with the Socialists, his anti-left stance found support in LMP’s right-wing sections.

Through the 2010 election campaign and ever since, the LMP maintained a style of political communication that prioritized complex intellectual argumentation and moral statements over taking sides in conflicts of interest. This strategy made the LMP's communications hard to understand in circles that have not been in contact with the ecopolitical intellectual tradition.

The party's election program for 2010 emphasizes the values of sustainability, justice, and participation. Its economic program is built around a "green turn," with a slow-down in production and the broadening of employment, especially in sustainable production forms like small-scale farming. Social issues are tackled under the heading, *Receiving society*, which deals with types of social marginalization from unemployment to ethnic or geographical differences.

In terms of LMP's relationship with what can be considered the non-post-communist Left, the name of Gábor Scheiring has to be mentioned. Between 2010–2012, Scheiring pushed consistently for a turn to the Left within the party. In parliamentary speeches as well as political essays, he emphasized the need for a more explicit leftist message of the LMP in order to counter anti-social effects of global market processes and government measures, as well as to prevent those harmed by either to ally with the extreme Right for lack of any leftist political voice speaking on their behalf. Scheiring did not succeed in influencing the party's political line, but his arguments have gained high visibility due to his position as a member of Parliament.

Scheiring was a member of Protect The Future from his early twenties and has written critically of neo-liberal capitalism throughout the 2000s in the manner of Lányi's moral politics. In Scheiring's formulation of the alter-globalist cause, the political strategy to oppose neo-liberal capitalism coincides with Lányi's ecopolitical conception of politics as a deliberation over values. Alter-globalism is about the intellectual redefinition of basic question, and about confronting politicians with moral dilemmas.⁴⁴ In his scholarly work, his criticism of neo-liberalism is expressed in complex argumentations using economic terms.⁴⁵ However, in public debates, his major argument remains a moral one. For the legitimization of that moral argument he relies on traditional liberal values rather than on an analysis of interest positions typical to the Marxist tradition.

⁴⁴ See especially D. della Porta, ed., *The Global Justice Movement—Cross-national and Transnational Perspectives* (London: Paradigm Publishers, 2007).

⁴⁵ Z. Boda and G. Scheiring, eds., *Globalizáció és fejlődés a félperiférián: válság és alternatívák* (Budapest: Új Mandátum, 2011).

It might rightly be argued that the liberal element in Scheiring argumentation is a strategic one that serves to legitimize a leftist position in the eyes of the liberal-minded intellectual elite and ask for their support. Scheiring makes recurring gestures towards liberal intellectuals, trying to convince them that his leftist position is acceptable on a liberal ground as well. In the article, which defines the LMP's leftist position based on the social referendum, he writes:

Political economy knows various approaches to the welfare state. According to a particular stream known as 'multiple capitalisms,' welfare measures can benefit the interests of capital. The politics of a green turn, represented by LMP along with other European green parties, is built on that model. According to that, welfare politics is not directed against the markets, but to serve the markets. (I humbly ask my Hayekian and market fundamentalist readers, who accuse the LMP of 'anti-capitalism,' to read the last sentence again. Thank you.)⁴⁶

That retreat, making LMP's leftism the ally of the interests of capital, is on the verge of contradicting Scheiring's various earlier statements. But even if we acknowledge Scheiring's emphasis on liberal values as the effect of strategic conditions, it remains a constant element of his political thought to attribute leftist political position to a freely made moral choice. The fact that so far the LMP's main target audience have been socially minded middle class intellectuals, rather than those affected by the measures criticized by LMP, corresponds to that concept of leftism. In that respect, Scheiring's leftism differs from the Marxist tradition of conceiving leftist politics in terms of conflict of interests.

The Fourth Republic (4K!)

The Fourth Republic started out in 2007 as a social movement organizing urban playground actions under the slogan of reclaiming public space. Later, it gradually turned towards more political topics. Since 2010, when Fidesz gained two thirds of parliamentary mandates, it became an explicitly political movement. In autumn 2011, it initiated a participative process to form it into a party, and it held its first congress on April 28, 2012.

The 4K! was founded by András Istvánffy, a former member of the Centrum group. From the early 2000s, he was well connected with the alter-globalist movement, and worked for one year with Protect The Future after the LMP was formed from it. Although he started from an au-

⁴⁶ Scheiring, "A gazdasági kiszolgáltatottság fáj."

tonomist-new anarchist criticism of the status quo, after one and a half year of voluntary work in 2006–2007 Venezuela, his understanding of the possibilities of formal politics changed. Returning to Budapest, he initiated a movement, conceived as a long term project for a leftist political turn in Hungary. Istvánffy started the 4K! together with a group of friends coming from well situated conservative families, who arrived at a leftist conviction by their own resolution, but preserved a connection to the tradition of populism and enlightened conservatism. As its constituency grew and became more heterogeneous, the influence of the founding group over the 4K! shrank, but some of the new movement's basic differences from ecopolitical or alter-globalist activism and liberal social sensitivity, can be associated with that background. In terms of political thought, some of those differences have also followed from a posthumous criticism of the alter-globalist movement.

The Fourth Republic defines its political position as “patriotic left.” András Istvánffy pointed out the relationship he sees between freedom, social needs, and patriotism in an interview in 2011 in the following way: “There has to be a place where you can live out your freedom. This means a positive relationship with that place. Patriotism means that you can be free in a place which you don't have to leave in order to stay alive, where you can get a deserved return for your work. Patriotism cannot be separated from the question of freedom, it means a healthy relationship to your country.” The 4K! declared it as an aim from the very beginning to take being Hungarian as a natural fact and a value. 4K! opposed its Hungarian patriotism to the cosmopolitan-liberal discourse of inferiority towards the West. In recurrent manifestations, it rejected the stigmatization of Hungary as underdeveloped and barbarian, attributing Hungary's situation to its structural position in the European and world economy, rather than any essential internal flaw. The front against Hungarian self-hate was one characteristic that differentiated the 4K! from other left-leaning initiatives speaking from an enlightened liberal perspective.

Another characteristic particular to the 4K! among the newer leftist groups was that it conceived of power and conflict of interest as inherent parts of politics. That approach is linked to the 4K! not being an intellectual movement, with significantly less intellectual members among its organizers than in the rows of any of the groups mentioned above. Due to that fact, its understanding of politics was from the start closer to a field of clashing interests rather than an intellectual or moral activity. One aspect of that attitude was that it recognized organizational structure—and hierarchy following from it—as a natural part of building a movement. Along

with the values of meritocracy and participation, the 4K! was conceived from the beginning as a structured organization, capable of organized action. That idea was consciously opposed to the alter-globalist and eco-political idea of a horizontal, organic civic network, as well as to the dissident tradition of rejecting power politics as immoral. Another aspect of the 4K!'s understanding of power in politics was that it conceived its leftist position in terms of siding with the interests of one social group against the other. As is stated in its basic principles, it intends to be a leftist party that "represents the workers and those who have less and less chance to be part of them: the shrinking middle class, the young, the poor and the excluded".⁴⁷ As such, the 4K! intended to be a non-elitist leftist movement, accessible from lower social positions. Through that characteristic it also defined an inclination towards populist leftism, contrasting to the elitist leftism of socially sensitive liberal politics or alter-globalism. Finally, the 4K!'s recognition of power in politics made possible its fast career from spring 2011, when it appeared as a fresh political movement in the broad coalition of various opposition groups criticizing the Fidesz government, to the position of a recognized political actor way before its turning into a party by autumn 2011.

Regarding the diagnosis the Fourth Republic provides of the present situation and the solution it offers, the image is more complex and somewhat underdeveloped. In its manifestations, the 4K! declares itself to be social democratic, standing close to a Swedish green-leftist model. In its program document, it defines its main values in terms of patriotism in the following way:

The program of the 4K! is built on patriotism. It is patriotism that defines our aims, our values and our decisions. Our patriotism has three main aims: the independence of Hungary, real democratic sovereignty of the people, and the possibility for everyone to make a righteous living. The three aims are interconnected, and precondition each other.⁴⁸

The document dismisses Horthy's Hungary, state socialism, and the present Third Republic for not realizing all three of patriotism's aims at the same time. The program pushes for the reinstatement of a republican constitution and a new path of development for Hungary, which would imply improving its position within the world economy, an active developmental

⁴⁷ 4K! *Alapelvek*, <http://negyedikkoztarsasag.hu/csatlakozz/alapelvek>, accessed September 25, 2012.

⁴⁸ 4K! *Program*, <http://negyedikkoztarsasag.hu/program>, accessed September 25, 2012.

strategy of the state, such as designating strategic areas for economic development, and an emphasis on workers' rights, collective property, and social welfare. The program criticizes the post-socialist consensus on unconditional liberalization of the market. It states that the promise of "catching up" with the West has not been fulfilled, proposes a more critical attitude towards the EU, and pushes for greater economic and political independence.

Compared with the tradition of the Marxist left, the question of international alliances is underemphasized in its program. However, it mentions a closer Eastern European collaboration, as well as a flexible and independent strategy of global alliances. With those general aims being set, the relationship between a nation-state based social democracy, the aim to improve Hungary's position in global economic competition, and the leftist idea of a systemic shift towards the bringing down of the rule of the market is not articulated in the program. In a traditional Marxist theoretical analysis, those aims contradict each other. It remains to be seen what would follow from them in practice.

So far, the political project of the 4K! can be considered successful. Using the tail wind of a broad liberal-Left coalition in the Fidesz government's opposition, it became a political figure of the Hungarian public sphere in a very short time. At the point of its first congress, without a previous movement network or NGO network to rely on, it has about as many members as the LMP at the point of its formation, and, as an exception among the non-post-communist leftist initiatives presented above, its base reaches beyond the circles of the socially inclined middle class, mobilized for humanitarian reasons, and involves those who feel offended by systemic processes themselves. In autumn 2012, before the beginning of the election campaign for 2014, the 4K! was polled at 2% among active voters.

Conclusion

Since the years of the regime change in Hungary, a constant warning from leftist positions has been voiced that social plight caused by the transformation might give rise to a new extreme Right. These voices urged for a leftist alternative to counter the explanations given by the extreme Right. Groups in the Marxist tradition have understood the social tensions in terms of a conflict of interest and made attempts to reach out to the disadvantaged without significant success. In the 2000s, a new wave of leftist

political activism took place within the ideological and organizational coalition of ecopolitical and alter-globalist initiatives. That coalition managed to gain visibility, and its third way framework was better accepted in an environment that marginalized traditional leftist criticism. However, the ecopolitical-alter-globalisationist coalition operated with a notion of politics based on moral value and ethical decisions rather than conflict of social interests. The ecopolitical-alter-globalisationist coalition and the ecopolitical party LMP founded on its network targets largely a socially inclined middle class constituency in its leftist initiatives and relies on their humanitarian feelings. The youngest non-post-communist leftist initiative, the 4K! was built on grounds closer to the tradition of populism and enlightened conservatism, as well as on the critique of the alter-globalist approach. Due to that, it accepts more easily the delegation of political power, unacceptable to the basic democratic ideals of ecopolitics and alter-globalism, and has been more successful in reaching out to a non-middle-class constituency.

The Architecture of Revival

Left-wing Ideas and Politics in Poland after 2002

MACIEJ GDULA

The last ten years could be called the decade of the Left although right-wing governments ruled Poland from 2005. The weakness in the political field was in contrast with the vitality of intellectual circles and the expansion of leftist ideas. After many years of liberal and conservative hegemony, the Left started to introduce new issues and perspectives to public debate and change what is politically possible.

I want to start with a short historical reconstruction of relations between the world of ideas and politics in Poland, which will be necessary to present the decline and revival of the Left in the last thirty years. In the main part of the text I will examine the most important issues and debates taking place on the Polish Left and relate it with certain actions and processes in the political field. In the last decade the questions of memory, gender, populism, neoliberalism, and the knowledge society were of a particular importance. Those issues remain interrelated but in each case, concrete problems were inspiring debates in other ways and provoked different political actions.

The Decline of the Left

Since the beginning of the eighties, relations between ideas and politics in Poland could serve as an example of the thesis about the supremacy of knowledge production over political action and the precedence of cultural hegemony to political power. In the eighties the Polish United Workers Party (*Polska Zjednoczona Partia Robotnicza*, PZPR) was still in power, but liberal and free-market ideas were increasingly influential. The results were clearly visible in the decade to come when liberals dominated policy decisions. In the nineties, one could simultaneously observe the development of right-wing intellectual circles and the growing popularity of ideas

created by them. After hegemony in the sphere of culture, political power came to right-wing parties after the 2004 election but it was accompanied by an increase in symbolic and intellectual strength of the Left.

To understand this gap between holding power and the vitality of ideas one must go back to the times of the Solidarity movement. In the official language after 1989, this movement was portrayed as an example of emancipatory social action directed against communist ideology and the reality of real socialism. In fact Solidarity was deeply embedded in the ideology of the People's Republic of Poland and its strength came not from total rejection of the existing order but from the tension produced by the disparity between the promises of the system and its reality. The twenty-one demands of Interfactory Strike Committee served as *locus communis* for the strikers and a symbol for the whole social movement. It was eagerly egalitarian, accepted the state as an actor controlling the economy, and advocated respect for the constitution and international treaties signed by Polish authorities. The program of Solidarity proclaimed at the end of 1981, which collected different ideological perspectives united during the Solidarity Carnival—nationalism, trade unionism, human rights activism—was built on the idea of self-governance as a kind of “inherent transgression”¹ to real-socialist regimes. This situation, in which both the rulers and the opposition were referring to related visions of a well-ordered society, ended with martial law in December 1981. Using violence to end the deadlock in which the Party and Solidarity were caught entirely changed the symbolical points of reference for the protagonists of conflict and turned the left-wing imagination to dust. In the official discourse of Solidarity, which acted underground after the legalization, the sharp distinction between society (us), and the people in power (them) was sustained. Nevertheless martial law for many Solidarity activists was disappointing due to the lack of broader social support for the movement at a critical moment. This experience is present in memories of a former activist: “When I left the prison and still had no keys to my apartment, I knocked on my neighbors’ doors. I start to say something like ‘I was put in a prison, maybe the police left you the keys to my apartment?’ and suddenly: thwack! The doors were closed. There was no anti-communist Polish nation which greets a hero coming out of prison and serves her tomato soup.”² On the side of the Party, the use of violence was a final confirmation of its lack of symbolic mandate to rule the coun-

¹ S. Žižek, *The Plague of Fantasies* (London: Verso, 1997), 18–22.

² K. Dunin, *Kochaj i rób* (Warsaw: Wydawnictwo Krytyki Politycznej, 2011), 66.

try. The Party, which still was a mass organization after December 1981, lost a great number of members, and its leadership was overtaken by the military. Martial law crushed two mass organizations that were leaning towards a left-wing ideology and cleared the field for new ideas.

Andrzej Walicki, one of the most important Polish historians of ideas characterized the Polish intellectual landscape in the eighties:

When I came back to Poland after the six years of absence in May 1987, the Polish intellectual scene was different from what I expected. Liberals were not treated like freaks, a lunatic fringe or at best a few crazy intellectuals demanding a recognition of ideas which are interesting in themselves maybe but completely improper for Polish standards. They became the most influential, the most dynamic intellectual circle (...) Supporters or at least well-wishers of liberal ideas were present almost everywhere concurring to a radical change of the general intellectual climate."³

Liberals were calling for the rule of the law, freedom, plurality, and the radical reform of the economy based on introducing market relations. Opting for *Realpolitik*, they were willing at least for some time to recognize the political supremacy of the Party if it would step back from its inclination to control both society and the economy.

These ideas were gaining support simultaneously with the attempts of the Party to reinvent its formula of ruling. The important moment reaffirming the change in the fundamentals of politics was the amnesty granted to political prisoners announced in 1986. The Party started to depart from orthodoxy in economic policy and tolerate the growing activity of civil society. Many grass roots initiatives were proliferating outside the structures of the underground Solidarity, which was also related to undermining the positions of Solidarity's leaders as representatives of the whole society and their political strategies. On the one hand there were groups of anti-communist radicals demanding to take away power from the Party and on the other the realists who were distancing themselves from the non-cooperation strategy based on moral claims. Among the latter were many liberals, some of them like those in the circle of the influential magazine *Res Publica* who decided to leave underground activity and started to print and distribute the magazine, thereby officially breaking ties with the leaders of the underground. This was not the same as sanitizing the liberals by creating a safe niche for their activity, as supporters of these ideas were still present either in the underground or in the Party.

³ A. Walicki, "Liberalism In Poland." *Critical Review: A Journal of Books and Ideas* 2, 1 (1988): 8–38.

The influence of liberal ideas showed itself with full force after the roundtable talks in 1989. The conviction to guide society out of the crisis, the faith in the market, private ownership, law and political realism with characteristic technocratic undertone were match-makers for the people coming from the Party and opposition. Liberalism brought people reluctant to radicalism closer and could serve as a common ground for the elites disappointed with the masses either on the side of Solidarity or post-communists. This meant a movement away from the politics of mass mobilization towards technocratic *Realpolitik* and the abandonment of central planning or self-government, ideas once so dear to Solidarity. No matter who was governing Poland after 1989, liberal ideas about the social order were crucial to governing society. One can trace their impact from the shock therapy of Balcerowicz, through processes of privatization and deregulation, and reduction of taxes, ending with the implementation of a very liberal pension system⁴.

In the nineties liberal ideas were popular among the ruling elites but public discourse was deeply influenced by fresh perspectives and topics. The split within Solidarity was followed by the crystallization of an aquiline right-wing worldview. Its vitality could be measured by the increasing inflow of supporters to conservative intellectual circles, the amount of journal publications, and the number of parties referring to right-wing ideas. The former was to become a reason of weakness in the political field: before 1997 the Right formed a single, short-lived independent government. Nevertheless it was the Right that shaped the debate and atmosphere in the nineties. Its *leitmotiv* was questioning the legitimacy of the new order from the perspective of an insufficient break with the old regime, which was later to evolve into the critique of imitative modernization. One of the main topics of public debate was the unveiling of former agents and collaborators of the secret services and de-communization, i.e. a claim to introduce prohibition to party members and officials from taking certain positions within the state. The lack of action in this area was presented as the biggest obstacle to the creation of a just social order since the existing one was based on tolerance of immoral attitudes and behavior. The approval for public activity of the representatives of the old regime was criticized as a wrong political decision made by part of the Solidarity leaders but also as a manifestation of moral relativism characteristic of liberal societies in the West.

⁴ K. Müller, "The Political Economy of Pension Reform in Eastern Europe." *International Social Security Review* 54, (2001): 57–79.

The Right took advantage of the general definition of the situation as social change and radicalized the claims about its pace. Its main demand was to finish the revolution that started with the creation of the Solidarity movement. Conservatives occupied anti-establishment positions as they advocated for the exclusion of still influential representatives of the old regime and attacked former leaders of Solidarity who had some political force and strong symbolic power. The crucial role in right-wing discourse was played by the notion of community, which preserved healthy dispositions and practices during the communist era and the time of Transition. For example, economic problems were interpreted as a consequence of informal relations cultivated by representatives of the old system. The network of corrupted links was presented as a chain restraining the market activity of the common people. The conservative critique did not undermine the belief that free market and capitalism are a part of the natural order of things. The situation was partly comparable to the situation in the beginning of the eighties when the conflict between the Party and social movement was played on the same ideological grounds and was propelled by an argument concerning the disparity between principles and ways of bringing them to life. In the nineties, intensive disputes about the transformation were not dealing with assumptions about the market and capitalism.

In 2002 the corruption scandal occurred which initially concerned the post-communist government but, finally, worked as the originator for fundamental criticism of the system built after 1989. In a short time right-wing parties gained vast social support and after the election in 2005, split the political scene between themselves. The popular explanation for their success was the disgrace of political elites, however the strength of right-wing narratives was founded on universalizing the topics present since the beginning of Transition. The accusations of slow pace in getting rid of remnants of communism evolved into the project of historical politics. Its agenda was to revive vernacular political traditions considered to be neglected treasures, such as republicanism, in order to stress the historical heritage of Poland, something to be cultivated and enhanced in order to sustain national identity and enhance political activity on entering the EU and its position once inside the European community. The position of the elites started to be undermined by the image of their cultural dependency and imitation of western patterns directly inspired by post-colonial studies.⁵ The unveiling of informal networks was developed into a generalized critique of corruption and demands for supporting the state as the executor

⁵ Z. Krasnodębski, *Demokracja peryferii* (Gdańsk: Słowo/obraz terytoria, 2003).

of law. The transformation of the old motives enabled the creation of an attractive narrative about the need for a deep break with the existing order and the necessity of building a new fourth republic.

Since the beginning of the eighties, the Left retreated from the realm of ideas. The project of a centrally planned economy collapsed and the idea of self-governance, usually used as an alternative both to central planning and capitalism, was eclipsed by the concept of a free-market. An interesting exception was the popularity and influence of the pacifist and ecological movements in the eighties, but they lost their vitality with the fall of real socialism.⁶ The Left was just commenting on the projects formed either by liberals or by conservatives but had nothing to propose that would outbid their visions. This situation was no obstacle for the Left deriving from the PZPR to form governments and for Aleksander Kwaśniewski to win two presidential elections in a row. The successes in the political field had a paradoxical effect on the situation in which the Left took the position traditionally filled by conservatives, i.e. the spokesmen for slowing down the changes and taking into account the social costs of modernization. The other reason that cannot be omitted was a critique of the growing power of the Church and its restrictive laws on abortion. Here the Left referred to “civilized standards” treating secularity and women’s rights as an element in Poland’s democratization package. It cannot be surprising that the leaders of Social Democracy decided to sacrifice those topics and set an informal pact with the Church when the stake was the entrance to the EU and the neutrality of the Church was defined as conditional for that process.

The moment of the intellectual revival of the Left was simultaneous to the success of right-wing parties. It does not mean that it was a mere reaction to the loss of political representation. New intellectual circles arose outside the old leftist institutions stimulating new debates, creating fresh diagnosis, and defining other fields of conflict.

Memory

In the nineties two perspectives on the past dominated leftist discourse. The first one was based on the assumption that the past is a historian’s domain and politics must be kept away. The second one was relying on

⁶ A. Ostolski, “Między wschodem a zachodem” in *Polski odcień zieleni*, ed. P. Sadura (Warsaw: Heinrich Boll Stiftung, 2008), 21–34.

positive opinions toward the Polish People's Republic (*Polska Rzeczpospolita Ludowa*, PRL) shown by opinion polls after 1989. It claimed that memory is spontaneously leftist and nothing can change it. Both perspectives, each in a particular way, were obstacles in bringing history into politics.

Aleksander Kwaśniewski won his first presidential election against Lech Wałęsa using the slogan “Wyberzmy przyszłość” (“Let’s Choose the Future”). The slogan was part of a broader strategy in dealing with the past. The idea was to break with conflicts about historical issues and continuous efforts to settle accounts with communism in the name of pragmatism. The interest of politicians in the past was presented as an immature obsession with tradition, involving an ideological distortion of history. The call to leave the past behind was functional for post-communists as it helped avoid facing the PRL’s recent past and served as a footbridge to a new order based on the demand for social change. The side effect of this strategy was the reinforcement of right-wing historical politics. Pragmatism meant creating distance from a narrative on history created and controlled by the Right and giving up the idea of building and defending the leftist vision of the past. In effect, the Left was also nationalistic but less nationalistic than the Right. The discourse of a pragmatic attitude towards history petrified the right-wing narrative about national community and Polish history because it was recognized as a legitimate vision even though the Left considered the vision too unequivocal.

The second perspective related with the memory of the PRL was characteristic of left-wing circles that identified themselves with the old regime. To understand it, one must take into account that in social surveys concerning the times of the PRL, the number of people who appreciated the old regime still outnumbered its critics and the same is true even of the decision to introduce martial law. The outcomes of the surveys were treated as evidence that in the attitude to the past, common people were on the side of the Left. Memory was naturalized as a reflection of reality and a closed book, which many years of anti-PRL official criticism after 1989 did not manage to change. In fact the PRL functioned here as an object of nostalgia secured from disputes and arguments. Taking into account that nostalgia assumes the process of mourning, it is not astonishing that reference to the PRL did not stimulate the formation of any alternative political projects.

Treating memory as a true representation of reality was the common ground for both perspectives. The past was left either to historians who could describe it properly or to normal people who truly remembered

what happened. The spokesmen of right-wing historical politics also made reference to truth but the way they defined it enabled them to bring history into politics. They wanted to tell the whole truth about the suffering of the Polish nation, still hidden and unrecognized. Those who wanted to leave history to historians and common people believed history to be a past separate from the present, while for the Right, unveiling the truth was about getting access to the past still affecting the present.

In matters of memory, the point of no return was the publication of *Neighbors* by Jan Gross and its following discussion.⁷ Gross's book told the story of the crime committed during the Second World War by the Poles to their Jewish neighbors in the small city of Jedwabne. This story was different from the earlier ways of presenting the issue of Poles and the Holocaust, which either focused on the dilemma of a witness or the phenomena of blackmailing those who were hiding Jews during the Nazi occupation of Poland. The first problem was usually understood and appeased by reference to the impotence of the Poles facing the overwhelming power of the Nazis and the otherness of the Jews, while the other was presented as the activity of criminals. In Jedwabne ordinary people, and not criminals, killed those whom they knew well—neighbors from a small town. The Left, facing the crime of Jedwabne, overstepped the nationalistic scheme in an understanding of the Second World War. The Jewish victims were civilians who died as a people excluded from the communities in the areas inhabited by them. The real concern for their fate obliged them to abandon the logics of national accounts of injustice prepared by calculating perpetrators and victims belonging to national communities. For the Left this also meant the redefinition of the concept of truth. The role of the historian is not only to describe the past and a memory is not only a simple recording of events. It became obvious that social memory is constructed on the basis of certain schemes, which determine what kind of victims, heroes, events, and processes will be remembered or forgotten. They are not only influenced by present conditions but also, in return, shape those conditions. After Jedwabne, the Left understood that the past is not a past time but a stake in the ongoing struggle for social reality. The Right was also not left untouched. In the beginning its representatives denied the crime, undermined Gross as a reliable historian, and called for the silencing of the whole story because it would not serve Poland well in international relations. After a while it accepted the Polish involvement in

⁷ J. T. Gross, *Neighbors: The destruction of the Jewish community in Jedwabne, Poland* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001).

the slaughter, but the simultaneous change in its narrative on Polish history was visible. The narrative started to tend towards the “Holocaustization” of Polish memory, i.e. presenting it through the events considered to be completely singular like the Warsaw Uprising or Katyń, where thousands of Polish officers were captured and murdered by Soviets in 1941.

While *Neighbors* was mainly focused on victims who could not be integrated into nationalistic interpretations of history, the next book by Gross related the Holocaust directly to a particular construction of the Polish national community after the Second World War.⁸ *Fear* presents aversion towards Jews in post-war Poland, which was present in everyday interactions with common people, public institutions, and threats of murder. It materialized in real assaults, murders, and pogroms. Post-war aversion had more than one reason. By their mere presence, Jews were recalling the crimes committed by Poles on their Jewish co-citizens. Jews returning from camps and shelters could reclaim their property. Some Poles were also glad that Hitler “cleared” Poland of Jews and interpreted returns as taking back the gift of fortune. This atmosphere provoked mass emigration of Holocaust survivors. This undermines the popular belief that Poland became a homogenous country as a result of historical changes independent from Polish commitment. In *Fear*, Gross is not only a critic of nationalism, he also shows that the nation built after WWII was an incarnation of a certain vision of the national community present in Polish culture that also contains other traditions. By making references to romanticism, Gross shows that sacrifice for others is not only an individual disposition but also an important element in the national ethos. When he describes people helping Jews to hide from Nazis he presents a diversified picture. We read about the Catholic writer Zofia Kossak-Szczucka helping Jews in spite of her pre-war anti-Semitism, about Polish peasants but also representatives of the intelligentsia, Catholics but also members of the Eastern Orthodox Church. This diversity harmonized with a Polish nineteenth century political project based on a vision of community built on people of different religions and ethnicities unified by the longing for freedom.

The interest in utopian potential hidden in the project of national community was present in several texts in which criticism of the exclusionary perspective on the nation was combined with a reflection on an alternative vision of community. The focus was on promises and ideals related to

⁸ J. T. Gross, *Fear: Anti-semitism in Poland after Auschwitz: An essay in historical interpretation* (New York: Random House, 2006).

national culture. Such promises are contradictory to all efforts oriented towards defending a nation or sustaining it. A nation is not an existing community but a community whose aim and justification is to bring to life universal demands such as freedom or brotherhood in the local context.⁹ The shift in understanding of the nation by the Left had consequences in political events. In 2011 an extreme right-wing march of independence was blocked by a coalition of leftist circles and groups. The blockade took the form of a historic feast “Colorful Independence” (*Kolorowa niepodległa*), which overtly referred to a nineteenth century romantic tradition and to revolutionary traditions of Polish workers movements at the beginning of the twentieth century. Although the right-wing march finally walked through the streets of Warsaw, the feast, which consisted of several thousand people, at least successfully blocked it from walking through the main street in the center.

Gender

The history of women after 1989 is in reality opposite to the dominating narrative at the end of communism, being one of emancipation and progress of freedom. The introduction of very severe anti-abortion laws at the beginning of the nineties was not the only case pressing for stronger attachment of women to traditional gender roles and obligations. The others were introducing religion to public schools, a ban on sexual education, and restrictions on public funding for contraceptives or in vitro procedures as a non-natural method of fertilization.

One has to remember that such changes were not introduced without friction. The beginning of the nineties was the period of Polish cultural wars in which the debate on abortion was of main importance. The opponents of the Church and right-wing parties referred to the language of rights. Anti-abortion regulations were criticized as a violation of fundamental liberties and freedom of choice for women as individuals. The limitation of freedom to make choices regarding one's own body and life was considered a breach of any civilized country's standards and a step backwards in the general direction of social development. Poland had supporters of modernity, freedom of choice, and pluralism on the one side of the barricade and defenders of life, tradition, and fundamental values

⁹ M. Gdula and A. Ostolski, “Polskość z odrobiną szaleństwa,” *Gazeta Wyborcza*, November 24–25, 2007.

on the other. This division dictated a conflict on abortion for a few years until it burned out in the second half of the nineties. There were several reasons for this ending, the most important being the controversial sentence of the Constitutional Tribunal declaring the right to abortion for economic reasons as unconstitutional, abandoning the claims concerning abortion by the post-communist Left, and a weariness toward the issue that started to be seen as irresolvable.

The decreasing intensity of conflict in this situation resulted in the strengthening of conservative discourse on gender issues that were underlying the specific role of women in Polish culture as mothers and caregivers, promoting family values, and successfully attacking any claims for equality between the sexes as an import of foreign ideas and fashions. This tendency was even stronger during the time of Polish accession to the EU, the moment when the right-wing and extreme right parties were flying high. It was becoming clear that modernization understood as a "return to Europe" and the introduction of market relations is not equal to the victory of modernity over tradition and that a certain model of modernization can be linked with conservative ideas about the arrangement of society. The Left and especially left-wing feminists started to give a new diagnosis and formulated strategies that would put gender issues on the political agenda again.

Feminists began to criticize popular public discourse as *cliché* about the natural conservatism of Polish society. In the right-wing discourse, the changes occurring after 1989 were interpreted as harmonization of legal order and cultural expectations of common people that finally happened after 40 years of communist experiment. The line of division in the nineties with the debate concerning the necessity to secure the individual against an oppressive traditional community was strengthening this perspective. In this next decade feminist texts that questioned the conservative character of society also resulted in a redefinition of the line of conflict. An important book here was *Czytając Polskę* (Reading Poland) by Kinga Dunin, one of the leading figures in the feminist movement, who reconstructed visions of Poland present in literature.¹⁰ For characters of popular novels, the conservative language of Church, family, and nation is not natural and it functions just as one cultural proposal in the spectrum of contemporary culture. The reality of everyday life is not a conservative society but rather capitalism and late modernity with their instability, tensions, and competition for resources and even for one's own unique iden-

¹⁰ K. Dunin, *Czytając Polskę* (Warsaw: WAB, 2004).

tity. The conflict between representatives of modernity and tradition should not be naturalized because in fact both sides belong to the same reality and take part in one game. Dunin ascertains that when it comes to the projects for the future and visions of good society, conservatism is weaker than the tendency to prize the ideas to negotiate identity of social actors and build a more equal and free society. If literature is articulating social experiences, the longings present there show that conservative language tells us more about the domination of certain political and symbolic elites than about the everyday reality of Poles.

Relations between nation and gender after the nineties were thoughtfully interpreted in the books of Agnieszka Graff. In order to undermine the naturalness of the bond between traditional gender roles and Polish national community, she analyzed public discourse and used cross-cultural comparisons to interpret it.¹¹ The rise of nationalistic sentiments related to stronger control of women and limitations of their rights was not only specific to Poland. The same happened in other countries such as Serbia, Turkey, India, and Ireland when those communities experienced crises or defined themselves as threatened. Graff interprets the dominance of conservative vision on gender issues as an outcome of fears related to Polish accession to the EU and an attempt to defend national interest and identity. The alternative is not opting for “civilized standards” as it dooms feminists and representatives of sexual minorities, whose claims became highly debated in Poland after 2004, to the position of outsiders, alien parts in a conservative body. According to Graff fighting back can be successful when feminists become involved in the struggles for redefinition of the rules organizing the national community in order to make it more equal and inclusive. This project can be inspired by the romantic traditions already mentioned but also by presenting the historical struggles for women’s rights as a constant and important part of Polish history.¹²

Striving to combine struggles for gender issues with local context brought changes to political actions organized by the women’s movement. In the nineties the focus on rights constricted adding economic questions to the claims of the movement. The situation changed in the middle of the previous decade when the disillusion of the market as an instrument of women’s emancipation and a particular model of capitalism introduced in

¹¹ A. Graff, *Rykoszetem* (Warsaw: WAB, 2008).

¹² See i.e. S. Chutnik, *Warszawa kobiet* (Warsaw: Polityka, 2011); S. Penn, *Solidarity's Secret: The women who defeated Communism in Poland* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2005).

Poland was increasing. Broadening the catalogue of issues considered to be a part of the gender problem, cooperation with social movements previously defined as distanced, and redefining the foundations of what is understood as women politics happened at a rapid pace. The first two issues are tied quite closely because, for example, recognition of the problem of low wages in female-dominated occupations was accompanied by close cooperation with the militant trade union of nurses and midwives. An important change occurred when the foundations of politics, thinking in terms of the common interest of all women expressed in the freedom of decision-making, was replaced by recognition of separate interests of women associated with a variety of identities determined by class, education, religion, or age.¹³ The politics started to be seen as a process of establishing alliances between different actors and linking their demands. A renewed agenda for gender issues combined claims about legal changes and equality between the sexes with demands concerning low wages and bad working conditions. The women's movement began working together with trade unions, the organization of nurses, and midwives or workers in supermarkets. A new vision of politics and interests enabled the movement to regain vigor and remobilize social energy around its demands.

Evidence of the growing influence of the women's movement was the Congress of Women, which took place in 2009. The Congress gathered together a wide variety of women, organizations and groups, which debated education, health, violence against women, and unemployment. Participants decided that the Congress should come up with one demand of a political character and agreed that it would be a demand for parity on electoral lists in Parliament. The movement collected 150 thousand signatures under the project of the bill, and Parliament passed a law, though its shape has changed, and parity was replaced by 30 % quotas. The positive outcome of the vote in Parliament was a great success, taking into account the fact that just a few years ago the idea of quotas was widely regarded as an artificial solution of social engineering and an expression of foreign fashion contradictory to the natural order of things. Although the arguments for parity referred rather to the logic of the common interests of women, the success of its introduction certainly owed a lot to the new practice of making politics—openness to the varied interests of women and the combina-

¹³ J. Erbel, "Od krytyki do walki o prawa związkowe. Przemiana ruchu feministycznego w Polsce w latach 2006-2007," *Kultura i Społeczeństwo* 3 (2008): 17-33; E. Charkiewicz and A. Zachorowska-Mazurkiewicz, *Gender i ekonomia opieki* (Warsaw: Biblioteka Think-tanku feministycznego, 2009).

tion of different demands—because this helped the women's movement to return as an important actor in the political process.

Populism

Although in the election of 2001 the post-communists won decisively and one could still think that the division of the political field between post-Solidarity parties and post-communist will last, the entrance of new parties like Self-defense (*Samoobrona*) and The League of Polish Families (*Liga Polskich Rodzin*) to the parliament foreshadowed deep changes in Polish politics. After the next election, those parties formed a coalition with the Kaczyński brothers' right-wing Law and Justice Party (*Prawo i Sprawiedliwość*), which is commonly described as populist, and the attitude towards its success has set a clear boundary between the old and new Left in Poland. The former including post-communists and circles close to the influential daily *Gazeta Wyborcza* saw the success of populists as a threat to democratic order and called for its defense, the latter saw the same phenomenon as a symptom of a crisis to the model of politics implemented after 1989.

The formation of a populist government coincided with the edition of a book by David Ost *The Defeat of Solidarity* that deeply influenced new left-wing perspectives on the current political process.¹⁴ The book was written before populists came to power but it ideally served as a clarification of the popularity of the parties demanding to clear Poland from secret service conspiracy and informal networks, hostile to sexual minorities, and appealing to anti-German and anti-Russian sentiments. Ost's narrative starts in the times of the first Solidarity, which according to him was an alliance between workers and intelligentsia articulating economic claims together with demands for broader political changes such as the legalization of independent trade unions or civil rights defense. This alliance started to crumble even in the eighties and it finally collapsed with the economic reforms implemented by the leaders of the opposition and trade unions. The workers who had a conviction that they decisively contributed to the fall of communism were strongly affected by the reforms and suffered from decreasing incomes and unemployment. Meanwhile the former allies and leaders who became main players in politics and media started to define workers as the main threat to economic transformation

¹⁴ D. Ost, *The Defeat of Solidarity* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 2005).

and presented workers' demands about preserving jobs and earnings as irrational and irresponsible. The workers were angry because of worsening material conditions and felt they were not being represented. Some leaders of Solidarity came to the idea of using the anger of the workers to gain political support without changing the economic logic of reforms. First of such politicians was Lech Wałęsa, who turned the workers' emotions against the first government built by the former opposition. He accused the government of being too moderate, too slow in getting rid of ex-Communists, and neglecting national interests. Wałęsa even used soft anti-Semitism in the campaign saying that he was Polish but in case he was Jewish he would have announced it publicly, which was a suggestion as to what his opponents in the government should do. This strategy of redirecting anger from the economic dimension to political and cultural conflicts persisted during the whole period of transformation and was used with success by populists after 2002.

For the new Left linking populism with the construction of liberal democracy has become a key to understanding the sources of the extreme-right's success. Sławomir Sierakowski, one of the most influential left-wing commentators, warned against knee-jerk criticism of the populists and the alliance with liberals in the name of Enlightenment values, because it was exactly that specific way of practicing liberalism that paved the populists' way to power.¹⁵ The extreme right does not cease to be opposed for obvious reasons, but it also has to be interpreted as a sign of the failure of the political sphere in modern liberal democracies, and the Polish situation here is not unique but rather typical, because similar processes occur in other so-called stable Western European political systems. As Chantal Mouffe noticed, populism is a response to exclusionary politics of consensus, which defines a framework for public debate in such a way that much of the demands, above all those of an economic nature, are delegitimized as a kind of greed, an invalid understanding of the logic of history, and the iron laws of economics.¹⁶ In Poland this politics of consensus was associated with economic reforms, whose shape was not debated, and their opponents were ridiculed and pushed out of the civilized public sphere. The repressed economic issues returned as the public's anger was directed against the elites and minorities at the same time. The

¹⁵ S. Sierakowski, "W Polsce, czyli wszędzie" in *Ile ojczyzn, ile patriotyzmów*, ed. M. Syska (Warsaw: Książka i Prasa 2007), 128–133.

¹⁶ C. Mouffe, *On the Political* (London–New York: Routledge, Taylor and Francis Group, 2005).

problem with right-wing populism is primarily the fact that instead of real reform it offers vicarious conflicts, and in the field of economics it continues the policies of the elites it used to criticize. The real opposition to populism necessitates challenging the construction of the entire public sphere and a redefinition of the line of the conflict, which again, should rather be the division between left and right and not a conflict of reason with irrationality.

Reflection on populism not only helped to bring the Left back to economic demands and defense of the interests of employees, but also contributed to its re-opening of the political process understood as an articulation of citizens' dissatisfaction and changing what passes for granted, inviolable dogma and evidence. In this respect, the criticism of right-wing populism was simultaneously associated with the recognition of the sole form of political action performed by the Right when it is understood as a change of what is possible. The diagnosis of populism meant a deep change in moving away from the anti-popular sentiments that dominated the Left—whether deriving from opposition or from PZPR—from the mid-eighties. Politics was no longer understood as a set of democratic procedures and technocratic management and started to be a process of articulating interests, building identity and carrying out passions, the process by which a society is constituted. The left-populist party “Palikot Movement” entered the parliament in 2011, was formed on the basis of an anti-clerical movement, and included supporters of the legalization of marijuana and representatives of sexual minorities. One should also mention the rapid expansion of the social movements related to the question of the rights to the city. The movements are oriented towards the articulation of different demands of inhabitants such as accessibility to housing, social services, and culture, influence over planning of public space and city budget spending or even problems relating to the repressiveness of law and police towards drunken cyclists. Various initiatives formed a platform called Congress of Urban Movements (*Kongres Ruchów Miejskich*), which is becoming a non-negligible actor in city politics. Those two examples, one coming from party politics and the other from grass roots activism may be evidence that the lesson of populism is starting to produce certain political effects

Neoliberalism

While populism has allowed criticism of the limitations of liberal democracy, identifying the neoliberal project has fulfilled a similar role in relation to capitalism. For many years of the transformation period, the economic debate was structured by a dichotomy of inefficient socialist and efficient capitalist economy and dominated by experts pointing to the need to cut taxes, privatize state property, cancel the restrictions concerning relations between workers and employers, and calling for public debt reduction. Their voice was treated as an impartial, scientific presentation of the principles governing a healthy economy. Those who have questioned these claims were treated as paleo-socialists and the economic illiterate. The situation changed from the previous decade with the discovery that the thesis of economic experts and the policies developed in accordance with their instructions was neoliberalism—a particular model of capitalism and not simply a market economy.

Reflection on neoliberalism in Poland developed in two directions. The first was a critique of neoliberalism as an unjust model of capitalism, the second examined neoliberalism as a real-existing class order producing certain tensions and conflicts that can lead to its transformation.

In the first case neoliberalism has been criticized as an ideology, an unjust social system, and an anti-democratic principle of governance. The neoliberal doctrine consists of the assumption that the market is the best mechanism for organizing social life and the resulting three tips, privatize, deregulate and reduce the deficit, are claimed to be universal. The market mechanism is supposed to be the best solution, independent of the cultural context, and equally serving all social actors as a neutral medium of exchange and rational allocation of resources. The market is not only rational and efficient, but above all, is free from the constraints of state and community as well as open to development and creativity.¹⁷ Criticism of this approach consists in unveiling particular interests of capital owners, which are covered by this ideology, but also in indicating how much the doctrine deviates from the neoliberal practice. The capitalists are demanding a smaller state, but when their interests are threatened they do not disain public money and the helping hand of the state.

Neoliberalism, not only as an ideology but also as a social system, is based on the systematic weakening of labor and the strengthening of capital. Employees, due to the progressive removal of restrictions on the circu-

¹⁷ T. Kowalik, *www.polskatransformacja.pl* (Warsaw: Muza, 2009), 226–227.

lation of capital, goods, and services, are forced to into greater competition, effectively exerting a downward pressure on their wages. In addition, high unemployment helps to break the solidarity of workers and fosters the desire to maintain a place of employment over wage claims. Legal changes involving a more flexible labor regulation (in Poland more than 30% of employees work on flexible contracts) and impediments to trade union activity in private companies additionally complicate the situation of workers. In addition to the benefits of the structural and legal weakness of labor, capitalists and business executives benefit from lowering tax rates both for companies and private income. The withdrawal of the state from regulatory functions and welfare resulted in a rapid increase of inequality and poverty, which translates into a large asymmetry in the life chances of citizens.¹⁸ In the longer term, neoliberalism brings the question of justice also to relations between actuality and future. Its model of development is based on the maximum use of existing resources without paying the price of its regeneration that concerns, for example, physical infrastructure, such as energy plants, or biological reproduction, which is reflected in the dramatically low birth rate in Poland.

Finally neoliberalism is a specific way of exercising power. *The Shock Doctrine* was written, of course, outside the Polish context, but there are reasons to include N. Klein's perspective here. Poland was an important point of reference for Klein; the book was rapidly translated into Polish and it was warmly welcomed and widely debated.¹⁹ Klein's hypothesis aims to clarify the conditions for possibility of introducing an economic and social model so unfavorable to employees and citizens; this is especially interesting in the case of non-authoritarian countries like Poland in the beginning of the nineties. She claims that the success of neoliberalism would not be possible if it did not exploit crises and situations in which social stability is at risk. The crisis as a moment of uncertainty disorganizes normal social processes and reduces resistance to change, which affects the current structure of interest. This hypothesis allows us to understand why employees were not organized in time to prevent the unfavorable reforms and why the opposition agreed to vote without a debate on the economic plan prepared by Leszek Balcerowicz with the help of foreign experts. Although Klein notes that ultimately democracy has become the tool for correcting the damaging effects of new policies, only a few

¹⁸ Kowalik, 129–143.

¹⁹ N. Klein, *The Shock Doctrine: The Rise of Disaster Capitalism* (London: Penguin Books, 2007).

people on the Polish Left would agree with her. Rather, it is considered that the shock of the early nineties destroyed the Solidarity and changed the structure of interest enough to sustain a deep asymmetry between workers and employers. The way reform was introduced casts a shadow over democracy in Poland as it shows that the most important changes in defining the framework of social life have been made respecting the procedures but violating the essence of democracy, understood as the emergence of a decision after taking into account the views and interests of citizens.

In the second approach to neoliberalism one can find many elements of the first, but a clear change in emphasis introduces significant differences to its understanding. The analysis of the neoliberal order is based here not on the opposition between employees and employers but relies on a more complex model of class relations. It is true that employees are experiencing falling wages and higher unemployment, but this affects to a much greater extent the working-class employees and not members of the middle class, the role of which after 1989 increased quite clearly. While the PRL social system could be described as industrial with a large working class, the neoliberal transformation changed it into a society where the demand for educated employees led to the creation of a significant middle class.²⁰ In 1992, skilled workers represented nearly 35% of the labor force and in 2005 only 28%, which looks like a relatively small decrease but when one remembers that the total number of employed workers decisively fell this meant the disappearance of about 2.5 million jobs. At the same time the middle class steadily increased its share among the employees from 11% in 1992 to 24% in 2005. In explaining the stability of social order one cannot ignore this group, because next to the owners and managers, it belongs to the beneficiaries of the new system as evidenced by both earnings and a lower risk of unemployment.

A close look at the sources of growth of the middle class undermines the popular thesis on the role of the market and diminishing state influence in the transformation process. The Polish middle class was primarily created through the development of public administration and services. The share of administration employees among the total employed increased between 1986 and 2005 from 1.5% to almost 7%. At the same time the finance and insurance sector could boast an increase of only 1 to

²⁰ M. Gdula, "Transformacja i system klasowy" in *Polska po 20 latach wolności*, ed. M. Bucholc, S. Mandes, T. Szawiel, J. Wawrzyniak (Warsaw: Wydawnictwa UW, 2011), 240–249.

2%. The public sector and the state have not only provided jobs but created stable and relatively well paid jobs which gave a large group of educated workers freedom from the pressures of market competition and unstable employment conditions. The role of the middle class in neoliberalism goes well beyond the Marxist concept of the role of the state as the executive committee of the bourgeoisie and the social democratic convictions of the state as a buffer in mitigating the effect of modernization.

The middle class of the public sector in neoliberalism conforms to the old working class as the main force of protest.²¹ This happens because of its growth, high rate of trade unionization, and limited ability to relocate middle class jobs. The strength of this class is also determined by the possibility of the universalization of its interests and forging effective alliances. In the last decade successful protests by nurses and teachers linking wage demands with claims regarding the availability and quality of public services contrasted with the few and solitary protests of the working class. Specific tension in a middle-class culture torn between career and aspirations to join the upper class and the desire for equal standards creates a situation in which its representatives may gravitate toward the maintenance of public services widely available as well as commercialization.²² For now the latter outweighs the former, but much depends on the alliances the middle class forms, which contribute to defining its interests.

Regardless of the differences between the two approaches to neoliberalism, reflection on this phenomenon has played a significant role in redefining the left-wing vision of the economic processes at least in two aspects. It became clear that instead of a neutral market one should understand capitalism in terms of structural conflicts determining its fabric. Secondly, neoliberalism, inversely to the naturalized market, is considered to be a historical phenomenon that can be subject to change and to politics.

²¹ M. Gdula, "The Middle Class in the Context of Contemporary Capitalism" in *Left in East-Center Europe*, ed. M. Syska (Warsaw–Wrocław: Ośrodek Myśli Społecznej im. Ferdynanda Lassalle'a, 2011), 117–123.

²² P. Sadura, "Państwo, rynek i klasy średnie w Polsce" in *Praktyki obywatelskie Polaków*, ed. J. Raciborski (Warsaw: Wydawnictwo IFiS PAN, 2010), 81–102.

From Knowledge Society to Cognitive Capitalism

A few years ago the concept of a knowledge society was an alternative to the narrow economic interpretation of economic processes focused on growth and was used by the Left to expand the field of debate and introducing issues such as innovation, investment, and human capital development. With time, an optimistic approach to the knowledge society gave way to an agonistic approach, which treats knowledge as a new area of conflict close to but not identical with other conflicts in the capitalist economy. This evolution is underlined in journalism and the books of Edwin Bendyk, who most decisively influenced an understanding of the relationship between new technologies and the processes of social change on the Polish Left.

Unlike the reflection on neoliberalism that were initially focused on conflicting aspects of economic relations, considerations on the knowledge society referred to the problem of economic growth. It was argued that in a new type of economy innovations and creativity are crucial for stimulating growth. Standardization, a virtue in the glory days of industrial capitalism, contributing to the accumulation of massive wealth through production and consumption, became a thing of the past. But there is no reason to yearn for standardization because in addition to prosperity it meant boredom at work, conformity in culture, predictability in biography, and the systematic destruction of the environment. The knowledge society in turn, relies on multitude, authentic emotions, self-fulfillment and ecological lifestyle combining decent wages, creativity, and cooperation.²³ The problem is that the growth model implemented in Poland is based on the opposite premise than that which now prevails in most developed economies. Expenditures on research and development are very low, foreign investments are attracted by low labor costs, the model of education is based on promoting individual competition, and the level of social capital understood as the mutual trust of the people is at the bottom. In addition, the dominant culture in Poland promotes thinking in terms of a homogeneous nation, and right-wing political parties exploit the differences of minority groups, especially sexual ones.²⁴ The reference to the knowledge society model allowed criticism of the limited perspective on the economy, which reduced the problem of growth to barriers imposed by the state on spontaneous market order and the conservative

²³ E. Bendyk, *Miłość, wojna, rewolucja* (Warsaw: WAB, 2009).

²⁴ E. Bendyk and J. Żakowski, "Miłuj geja swego," *Polityka* 23 (2005).

culture promoting unity and uniformity. Building an alternative vision of development was coupled here with a reflection on the place Poland holds in the world-system, emphasizing that catching up with the developed countries and building a society that would be prosperous as well as open required the involvement of the state to inspire change and create possibilities through stirring up the potential of citizens, something observed in South Korea and Finland.²⁵

Pretty soon this optimistic picture of the knowledge society had been replaced by an analysis of cognitive capitalism, which focused on several aspects of the question of work. Contrary to the rosy forecasts concerning the knowledge sector, it soon began to reproduce the mechanisms of inequality between employees. Processing information and symbols creates a demand for highly qualified specialists but also for a number of employees performing less complex jobs such as data collection, completion of questionnaires, or work in call centers. The so-called digitariat, although essential to the functioning of the knowledge society, shared the fate of a low-wage workforce just as in other branches of the economy. Widening income inequalities finally also reached the employees who had more creative jobs. One can witness it today in the media where the crisis in newspapers and on television together with the transition to reduced wage standards on the Internet are turning journalism into a defunct profession. However labor and proper payment reaches a more fundamental problem than the sole inequality of earnings. The production of wealth depends not only on commodified work sold on the market, but primarily on human activity not identified as work. Informal and seemingly insignificant actions such as care, surfing the web, casual conversation, parenting, and social events form the network that is indispensable for the functioning of the system. This work is done not only by employees but also by people outside the labor market: the young, pensioners, women, and the unemployed. The system treats their efforts in creating wealth as meaningless, something that doesn't require payment. On the other hand, there is a tendency to use what is a joint effort developed in informal networks of contacts as a commodity and protect it by patent rights and copyright. Culture spontaneously produced by many generates profits for small groups, which manage to convince the legislature that it is their property.²⁶

Cognitive capitalism is not a complete system of domination and to the old forms of conflict it adds new ones. Traditional disputes arising out of

²⁵ E. Bendyk, 2004 *Antymatrix: Człowiek w labiryncie sieci* (Warsaw: WAB, 2004).

²⁶ Bendyk, *Miłość, wojna, rewolucja*.

relations between employers and wage workers, and ongoing ecological struggles since the seventies, are appended by the conflicts regarding the main dimensions of the knowledge society—such as free circulation of cultural goods—and arguments about the utilization of non-commodified work. Capitalism has always manipulated the access to scarce goods in the process of capital accumulation, which is exemplified by fencing in Great Britain. Today, the equivalent of the old pastures are sounds, words, images, and genetic codes. There are numerous initiatives and social movements against fencing, which call for a reduction of barriers to cultural goods and offer an alternative model of knowledge production and means of sharing it. Free culture movement calls for the abolition of the limits of copyright and patent preferring the logic of generosity and gift, which is more productive and relevant to cultural goods. The fact that more people will read a text, listen to songs, or watch the picture does not violate property rights, and only allows the participation of increasing cultural diversity. Conflicts with copyright join in discussions about drugs and the patenting of organisms and mass protests against the further commercialization of science.

Such discussions in Poland relate to niche problems of enthusiastic Internet users or the reality of more developed countries, but quite unexpectedly in early 2012, the affair of ACTA happened. ACTA is an international agreement forming a convenient framework for controlling content on the internet, blocking sites, and prosecuting users who violate copyright with omission of the jurisdiction of the national state. The Polish government agitated for the agreement during its presidency of the EU and decided to sign it in spite of criticism coming from watchdogs. This decision led to massive protests by young people demanding that Poland does not ratify the agreement. These were large-scale protests by Polish standards. The manifestations spread throughout the country bringing to the streets tens of thousands of people both in big Polish cities like Warsaw and Cracow, but also in small centers, where the last protests occurred probably during the first Solidarity thirty years ago. The prime minister, troubled by the protests, decided not to ratify the agreement.²⁷

²⁷ E. Bendyk, *Bunt sieci* (Warsaw: Polityka, 2012).

The Return of the Political

Regardless of the issue attracting the debates taking place on the Polish Left, one can clearly separate a few common motifs. They determine the difference between the new Left and the intellectual formation associated with the post-communists and left-wing circles of the former opposition and prove it does not arise only from the use of the latter but involves a redefinition of the whole vision of politics that had dominated the Left for twenty years.

First, there has been a distancing from the use of naturalized concepts of liberal democracy and the market. In both cases, they functioned as an imaginary standard used to call to order. In this framework the fight for the right to abortion was carried out in the beginning of the nineties, whose result was not completely effective, but certainly impressive if judged by the level of social mobilization. However one should not forget that the standards were also used in Poland to delegitimize economic demands and irrationalize social protests. Standards had to be something non-negotiable so that the opponents must stay silent if they wish to remain reasonable people. Reflection on populism and neoliberalism made the Left withdraw from such an understanding of standards and the whole logic of politics it precludes. Liberal democracy for the Left today is rather a part of the problem that contemporary societies have to face and not the incarnation of democracy. In fact the notion of democracy without adjectives is critical and subversive towards liberal democracy as can be seen not only in the texts, but also in political activity with the European movement of outrage at the helm. Also the market ceased to be treated as a neutral mechanism for social coordination and allocating resources. Capitalism is both a site of conflict concerning the partition of wealth and the historical system in which an evolution of different models of distribution and exploitation takes place.

Distance to naturalized structures, which were supposed to constitute a guarantee for the reasonable construction of society, favored a change in anti-popular sentiments in leftist politics. Protests, mass mobilization, and commitment are no longer considered to be a threat to the delicate order, but are perceived rather as the opportunity for social change, which can bring a more just settlement. The interests and emotions are not regarded as something to be ashamed of and kept away from politics. Without them, politics become a dispassionate technocratic policy, which not only leads to the sterilization of politics, but also brings the risk of making mistakes arising from the arrogance of enlightened experts who know better than ordinary people how to organize the world.

Changing attitudes towards popular politics is accompanied by the idea of embedding left-wing projects in local conditions and political landscapes. Whether memory, gender relations, or neoliberalism are considered, the reflection strives for the specific context and experiences. However, we do not deal here with the idealization of a particularity or the search for something like a "Polish model of socialism." The interest in the locality combines two aspects of politics related to the political struggles: the fact that they are always associated with the system of interest and assume the need for an ideal or utopian dimension of politics. For the Polish Left, national community is becoming a utopian reference, not as a nation prepared to separate the community from other communities, but as a challenge and an open design that allows it to combine the concrete with more universal goals such as freedom or justice (less embarrassment at using grandiose terminology is also an element of change on the Left in the last decade).

It seems that being given the scheme of the priority of cultural hegemony over the political power in Poland, one should expect the takeover of the government by leftist parties in the short term. Sensitivity to new lines of conflicts and the ability to define political problems seem to give the Left an advantage over its competitors. However, the Left's changing way of interpreting the politics means that it must be careful in relying on any naturalized scheme, no matter how effective it seems to be. The future of Polish politics depends on the intensity of conflicts, skills to form alliances, ability to define the identity, and articulation of interests. All one can say about the Left, which has developed such a framework to understand politics, is that it is not deprived of chances for success.

The Formation of the Czech Post-Communist Intellectual Left

*Twenty Years of Seeking an Identity*¹

STANISLAV HOLUBEC

The Czech post-communist intellectual Left² offers an interesting story showing the dilemmas and paradoxes of left-wing political thought in a society, which, in the two decades after 1989 was prevalingly mistrustful of the ideas of socialism, social justice, and equality after the experience with the communist regime. However, the public's encounter with the negative aspects and failures of capitalism and representative democracy called for alternatives and critiques of the contemporary order and the demand for a left discourse after the turn of the century. Shortly after 1989 it seemed that the Left and particularly socialism as a political, intellectual, and cultural force was dead forever. The defeat of the Left, not only in its authoritarian form, was visible everywhere in the post-Soviet countries. But in the Czech lands, the public's enchantment with neoliberalism seemed to the Left even more surprising than in other post-communist countries because the Left had had a strong pre-Soviet historical tradition. Indeed Czechia was one of the few countries in the Soviet bloc to have an important socialist and workers movement before 1914, Czech Social Democrats being one of the

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² I understand the term intellectual Left as a part of the public political discourse which raises ideas that are critical of capitalism as well as ideas supporting direct democracy, alternative forms of ownership, the involvement of the state in economic affairs, the welfare state, the importance of social justice and equality, and peaceful international policies. The intellectual Left consists mainly of public intellectuals and their publication platforms (journals, books, public speeches). The intellectual Left is different from leftist social movements, which have a certain agenda, mobilize their supporters, organize various events, etc. The intellectual Left differs also from the Left political groupings or parties, which have a certain structure, hierarchical organization and legal statutes, whereas the intellectual Left is an informal group defined mainly from outside, usually connected however by personal ties and mutual influences.

strongest in Europe at that time. The Czechoslovak Communist party, established in 1921, was known as the third largest in the world in the 1920s (behind the Russian and German Communist Parties), and the interwar Czechoslovak political culture was prevalently left-oriented, with many intellectuals expressing their sympathies for communism or democratic socialism. The spectacular electoral victory of the communists in 1946 is also a case with no comparison in Europe. Even after twenty years of building socialism these sympathies did not disappear: the 1968 “Prague Spring” saw an attempt to reform socialism from above instead of introducing liberal parliamentary democracy and a market economy. Anti-communist resentment, by contrast to Polish or Hungarian revolts, played a minor role. It seems that it was primarily the experience of the Soviet invasion, political purges at the beginning of the so-called normalization, the regime’s unwillingness to reform itself up to the late eighties, and possibly the international neoliberal turn which destroyed public sympathies towards the political Left in the subsequent decades.

In this article I focus on the seven figures of the Czech post-communist intellectual Left who had the most influential voices and who personified five different traditions or social milieu of Czech political life. I discuss them not primarily as thinkers but rather as public intellectuals, analyzing their writings and reflections on important events that the country came through during the twenty years of transformation. The first two figures, philosophers Ivan Sviták (1925–1994) and Karel Kosík (1926–2003) represented the tradition of reform communism. They participated actively in the Prague Spring of 1968, and were marginalized afterwards, spending the “normalization” era in exile or dissent. The second group of intellectuals can be called the anti-Stalinist radical Left. This group criticized the whole communist regime from leftist positions and was mainly inspired by Trotskyism but also by the Western New Left and Maoism. During the Prague Spring, they formed the Opinion Association of the Left (*Názorové sdružení levice*), and the Movement of Revolutionary Youth (*Hnutí revoluční mládeže*) at the beginning of normalization.³ An example discussed here is the philosopher, poet, and writer Egon Bondy (1930–2007). The third group is the communist intellectuals who either survived the purges after 1968 or were too young to become involved in the Prague Spring, so they became the party members after 1970 and, during the years of *glasnost* and *perestroika*, sympathized

³ For the more detailed overview on the history of radical Left under state socialism see P. Pečínka, *Pod rudou vlajkou proti KSČ: osudy radikální levice v Československu* (Brno: Doplněk, 1999).

with the reforms. After the fall of communism, they tried to look for a new paradigm for the democratic and radical Left. An example of this is the political scientist Oskar Krejčí (*1947). The fourth group are the sympathizers of the environmental politics from the 1980s and the 1990s, who became more pro-leftist in the late 1990s and 2000s, including sociologist Jan Keller (*1955) and journalist Jakub Patočka (*1973). The fifth group includes the converts to the Left, notably former supporters of liberalism during the 1990s such as Václav Bělohradský (*1941).

The criteria for choosing these figures were as follows: I aimed to have a balanced sample representing the different traditions of the Czech intellectual Left. Second I focused on those who can be called intellectuals. All of them have social sciences degrees mainly in philosophy but also in sociology, history, or political science. Five of them have been or are professors, namely Sviták, Kosík, Keller, Bělohradský, and Krejčí. Third, I aimed to choose personalities who were not directly involved in party politics, at least most of the time, and did not want to serve as ideologues of any particular political party. Fourth, I have chosen figures who were or became critical of renewed Czech capitalism and were looking for alternatives to it, but at the same time never resigned from basic democratic values.

I am going to analyze the positions and opinions of the authors on six particular periods and topics which I consider as crucial for both the formation of the Czech post-communist intellectual Left and the development of the Czech post-communist society in general. 1. The building of neoliberal capitalism and the dissolution of Czechoslovakia 1991–1992. 2. The crisis of the Czech economic transformation and the crisis of the political Right 1997–1998. 3. Globalization and the protest against it 1998–2000, particularly the global street party in Prague in 1998 and the IMF Prague summit in 2000. 4. Accession to NATO in 1999, protests against the Kosovo war in the same year and the Iraq war in 2003. 5. Protests against the U.S. Radar base 2006–2009. 6. Protests against the neoliberal government and its reforms after 2010. I have chosen these events among others because the selected intellectuals most frequently formulated their standpoints in these cases. Long-term profiling topics will be the relationship of the analyzed intellectuals towards the existing political parties, towards the so-called liberal consensus in the Czech society and towards Czech nationalism, which I analyze in particular subchapters.

In the first part of my article I will introduce briefly the biographies of the intellectuals being examined. In the second part I will focus on the mentioned events and processes and I will try to show the changing positions of the chosen personalities involved.

Seven Biographies and Traditions

The first group consisted of the people born during 1915–1930 who were politically socialized during the Great Depression or the Nazi occupation. This experience led them to full acceptance of communism in its Stalinist form. However, they lost the Stalinist faith soon after 1953 and became the proponents of communist reformism. Their activity culminated during the Prague Spring, in which they served as the intellectual elite and were severely punished afterwards for these activities. Some of them ended up in exile, some of them in dissent. After 1989, they were too old to again become leading intellectuals, and although they had been rehabilitated, their influence disappeared soon afterwards and sometimes they were even criticized by the political Right because of their Stalinist youth and their post-1989 reluctance to distance themselves from the Left.

Philosopher Karel Kosík is the most notable example. As a young man involved in anti-Nazi resistance, he was arrested in 1944 and sent to a concentration camp. After the war he studied philosophy in Prague and the Soviet Union. He became one of the leading “Marxist revisionists” trying to integrate the tradition of “young” Marx with the phenomenology of Heidegger and existentialism. He became famous after publishing his book *Dialectics of the Concrete* (1963), which earned him admiration from the Marxist and non-Marxist intellectual world in the East as well as in the West. In his later writings, the inspiration of ancient philosophy, Christianity, and the thinking of T. G. Masaryk are visible. As a leading Czech philosopher, Kosík was engaged in politics and, during the Prague Spring of 1968, he was a member of the Central Committee of the Communist Party. After the Soviet invasion and subsequent purges, Kosík was released from all institutions and spent the next twenty years unemployed and later was a disabled pensioner. After 1989 he returned to Charles University, but was forced to leave again after two years. The reasons remained unclear; possibly he resigned after he was asked to apply as a senior lecturer formally for funding for his salary.⁴ His last affiliation was with the Institute of Philosophy at the Czech Academy of Sciences.⁵

⁴ P. Taněv, “Karel Kosík”, *Reflex* 45 (2003): 68.

⁵ For a collection of articles on Kosík see M. Hrubec, M. Pauza, J. Zúmr et al., *Myslitel Karel Kosík*, (Prague: Filosofía, 2011); M. Adam, *Karel Kosík v kontextu marxistického myšlení (osobnost a rozbor díla)*, MA Thesis, Jihočeská universita v Českých Budějovicích, 2010.

Ivan Sviták was, like Kosík, a philosopher by training and politically socialized during the war. One of his uncles, an officer and leading figure of the Czech resistance, was executed by the Nazis, which possibly turned him to the left. As an upper class young man Sviták did not join the Communist party in 1945, as did Kosík, but rather he joined the Social Democrats, where he belonged to its left wing. After the communist take-over, he and other pro-communist members of the Social Democrats were unified with the Communist party. Similar to Kosík, Sviták went through a Stalinist phase in his life and soon after 1953 became one of the leading "revisionists." His bohemian lifestyle and politically provocative writing resulted in his expulsion from the party⁶ and from the Institute of Philosophy in 1963.⁷ As a nonparty member he engaged in various discussions during the Prague Spring (e.g. establishing a social democratic party), and he was seen as one of the most radical supporters of the renewal of parliamentary democracy in Czechoslovakia. After the Soviet invasion, Sviták emigrated to the United States where he became professor of philosophy at the State University of California and was involved in the exiled Social Democratic party. In his political writings he was quite ambiguous, supporting Maoist China at one time and the politics of Ronald Reagan at another. He returned to Czechoslovakia in the spring of 1990 and soon became involved in the activities of various leftist groups, though not in the renewed social democracy for rather personal reasons (however he considered this party later too pro-capitalist). Sviták was the only important intellectual who openly supported the Communist party in its programmatic transition towards democratic socialism as early as fall 1990 and was even willing to help actively in this endeavor. Sviták had been elected as an independent candidate to the Czechoslovak National Assembly in 1992 for the coalition Left Bloc, which was a merger of the Communist party and a number of smaller leftist groups. After the dissolution of Czechoslovakia and the inability of the Communist party to reform itself to a democratic socialist profile Sviták turned toward social democracy, which under Miloš Zeman took a more radical course after 1993.⁸ His pro-communist engagement earned him social ostracism in

⁶ J. Mervart, "Věčný rebel Ivan Sviták - středoevropský intelektuál mezi východem a západem" in *České, slovenské a československé dějiny 20. století. 2. Sborník z mezinárodní konference mladých vědeckých pracovníků. Univerzita Hradec Králové, 7. - 8. 3. 2007* (Ústí nad Orlicí: Oftis, 2007), 125–133.

⁷ A. Kolman, *Zaslepená generace: Paměti starého bolševika*, (Brno: Host, 2005), 250.

⁸ S. Holubec, "Ivan Sviták v letech 1990–1994. K dějinám polistopadové levice," *Časopis národního muzea, historická řada* 1–2 (2001): 89–113.

Czech public life (his death in 1994 was scarcely noticed in the mainstream press). He combined in his writings an explicit defense of Marxist tradition, with admiration for social democracy, and a predilection for certain topoi of Czech nationalism. Among other important figures representing this group we can mention the political scientists and politicians Zdeněk Mlynář (1930–1997), Čestmír Císař (1920–1913), Miloš Hájek (1913–1993), the economist Miloš Pick (1926–2011) and the literary theorist Eduard Goldstücker (1913–2000).

The second Czech Left radical tradition based on Trotskyist roots⁹ is represented here by Egon Bondy (born Zbyněk Fišer), also a philosopher by training but better known as a writer and poet. Although he was of the same generation as Kosík or Sviták, Bondy—a child from an interwar upper-class family—was socialized in the short period of 1945–1948 mainly in the circles of surrealist artists and was influenced by the leading Czech theorist of the avant-garde, Karel Teige, and Trotskyist philosopher and historian Závist Kalandra. Even though Bondy supported the Communist party at that time and during its takeover in 1948, he became a staunch opponent to Stalinism during the political trials in which his friend Kalandra was executed. As a symbol of protest against Stalinist anti-Semitism he chose a Jewish pseudonym and consciously led his life on the edges of society in the circles of marginal bohemians (e.g. writer Bohumil Hrabal who made Bondy one of the characters in his novel). During de-Stalinization, Bondy passed the graduation exam at secondary school and studied philosophy at the beginning of the 1960s. Although he never became an academic philosopher and had only a minor job in the National library after his graduation, he slowly started to exert an intellectual influence on the Czech radical Left, which was formed shortly before the Prague Spring. His book *Buddha* (1968), in which he attempted to combine Buddhism and Marxism, raised particular interest among the circles of young intellectuals and radical students. During the Prague Spring Bondy, a non-member of the Communist party, established the Opinion Association of the Left (*Názorové sdružení levice*), inspired by the Maoist Cultural Revolution. After the Soviet invasion Bondy again resigned from official life and became a disabled pensioner. He spent the next twenty years in the “underground” and was admired mainly by the young people who loved his informal and friendly style combined with extraordinary

⁹ A good description of the young Czech radical Left with the Trotskyist roots is offered by M. Bastl, *Radikální levice v České republice: devadesátá léta dvacátého století* (Brno: Masarykova univerzita, Mezinárodní politologický ústav, 2001).

education¹⁰ (the well-known underground music group Plastic people of the Universe set his poems to music). Dissident circles were rather mistrustful of him because of the rumors circulating about his alleged collaboration with the secret police. He was widely considered a psychologically unstable and mendacious person (his signature under Charter 77 was denied for these reasons). Shortly before the collapse of communism, Bondy founded, together with other leading Czech Trotskyist Petr Uhl (*1941), the Left Alternative (*Levá alternativa*), but he was forced to leave it after his collaboration with the communist secret police became confirmed. Bondy supported, as did Sviták, the Left Bloc in 1992, and after the dissolution of Czechoslovakia he moved from Prague to Bratislava, where he obtained a university professorship post. He resigned from any public engagements and devoted his last years to writing novels and philosophical texts. His anti-utopian novel *Cybercomics* (1997) became especially widely admired among the younger Czech and Slovak leftist generation. His sociological and philosophical essays (e.g. *On Globalization*, 2005) were popular for their sharp critique of capitalism. Bondy's thinking was influenced by Marxism, surrealism, Eastern religious and philosophical thinking (particularly Buddhism and Taoism), and Christian theology. A certain role in his thinking was also the idea of transhumanism¹¹ and shamanism. After his rather mysterious death in 2007, he is still discussed and remembered not only by the Czech leftist circles but by a broader public as well. A particular popularity was gained by his memoirs from the 1950s—*Prvních deset let* [*The First Ten Years*] published in 2002 and has also been made into popular movie *Tři sezóny v pekle* [*Three Seasons in Hell*, 2009] and Bondy's *Cybercomics* has been recently adapted for theatre (2013). Other important names in this group

¹⁰ Marie Klečanská-Beyly, *Vzpomínky malostranské* (Prague, Akropolis, 2008).

¹¹ According to Egon Bondy in his collection of essays written in 1970 and published later under the name *Juliiny otázky* [Julia's questions] humans are not beings capable of building Communism because of their partly biological nature, which helps them to create a work of art but on the other hand it also is the cause of their greed, aggressiveness, selfishness, and other characteristics prohibiting the functioning of Communism. However humans will possibly one day create the post-human "artificial beings", the non-biological organisms who will devote their efforts to the knowledge and creation of more stable forms of intelligent life (Communism). The humans will exist further only as lower types of organisms, respected by the artificial beings as their fathers and they will devote their lives to art and other pleasures. The only pre-condition to create the trans-humans is the destruction of capitalism, because it leads the evolutionary development to a dead end. See E. Bondy, *Filosofické dílo. Sv. II, Juliiny otázky a další eseje* (Prague: DharmaGaia, 2007), 23–122.

include poet and writer Milan Nápravník (*1931), historian and Paris émigré Jan Tesař (*1933), and lawyer and environmentalist Petr Kužvart (*1956).

The intellectuals who were not expelled from the party after 1968 or those of the younger generation born after 1945 who joined during the 1970s, supported the *perestroika* process in the late 80s, and tried to renew the paradigm of the radical Left after 1989 make up the third group. This milieu seems to be less known and researched in scholarly literature than the first two groups. It should be stressed that many younger reform communist intellectuals from the late socialist period resigned from any renewal of socialism and instead evolved to become staunch neoliberals, e.g. the Prague economists around Václav Klaus (he personally was not a member of the party) such as Vladimír Dlouhý, Karel Dyba, and Ivan Kočárník, all of whom became leading architects of the economic transformation. By contrast, those in the Communist party that remained faithful to the socialist ideals either attempted to form a new left party or to reform the CP towards democratic socialism. The first attempts had already been made during the Velvet Revolution, when the Democratic Forum of Communists (*Demokratické fórum komunistů*) was formed and unsuccessfully ran for election in 1990 as the Czechoslovak Democratic Forum. There were three other attempts by reform wings of the CP to establish new parties between 1991–1993 but they all failed in the same way as the attempts to rename the party and transform it towards some kind of democratic socialism.¹² Intellectually the most important figure in the leftist scene from this milieu was the political scientist Oskar Krejčí. He studied at Charles University where he was, according to archival sources, involved as a student in the purges after 1968.¹³ Later he became

¹² The best description of the process can be found in P. Fiala et al., *Komunismus v České republice: vývojové, systémové a ideové aspekty působení KSČM a dalších komunistických organizací v české politice* (Brno: CDK, 1999). The recent period and the politics of memory and identity politics are the central focus in M. Kopeček, “Stigma minulosti, pouto sounáležitosti. První desetiletí českého polistopadového komunismu” in *Rozdělení minulosti, Vytváření politických identit v České republice po roce 1989*, Adéla Gjuríčová et al. (Prague: Knihovna Václava Havla, 2011), 343–381. A well-written overview of the topics is also in V. Handl, “Living with or in the Past? Czech Communists between Canonisation and Coming to Terms with their History” in *Diktaturüberwindung in Europa. Neue nationale und transnationale Perspektive*, ed. B. Hofmann et al., (Heidelberg: Universitätsverlag Winter, 2010), 84–102.

¹³ Jakub Jareš, Matěj Spurný, Katka Volná a kol., *Náměstí Krasnoarmějců 2 : učitelé a studenti Filozofické fakulty UK v období normalizace* (Prague: Univerzita Karlova v Praze, 2012).

a researcher at the Institute for Philosophy and Sociology at the Czech Academy of Sciences. He spent several research stays in the USA and the Soviet Union in the 1970s and 1980s. In 1988 he became an advisor to the new federal Prime Minister Ladislav Adamec, who started negotiations with the political opposition during the Velvet Revolution. Krejčí played an important role in the negotiations and later described it in a half analytical, half biographical book, *Proč to prasklo?* [Why did it break down?, 1991]. He refused a political career in the CP (in November 1989 he was offered a position as the Secretary of the party's Central Committee)¹⁴ but kept in contact with the communists for the next two decades. Being clearly connected with the *ancien régime* and scandalized similarly as Bondy as a collaborator with the secret police, he had difficulties for several years finding a relatable job or publication possibilities. He too started a new academic career in Slovakia where he became professor of International Relations at the University of Banská Bystrica. He was able to return to Czech academia after 2000 when the first private universities seeking qualified scholars were established. Since 1997 he was able to publish his analysis in the weekly *Ekonom* and after 2010 he became a commentator in *Literární noviny*, once they were taken over by people of similarly leftist views. In his writings, not only the influence of Marxism is visible, but also that of American geopolitical thinking and current theories of social change (post-industrial society, stages of growth). Yet his geopolitical ideas were formed by Czech political thinkers such as Palacký and Masaryk and took on their moderate democratic nationalism. This group or generation despite its large social background is surprisingly one of the least visible in Czech political discussion. Alongside Krejčí we can mention here also the philosopher, historian, and communist politician Miloslav Ransdorf (*1953).

The environmentalists, who came to associate themselves with the Left at the turn of the century, form the fourth group of our analysis. The best-known personality from this camp is Jan Keller, a Moravian who studied sociology and history at the University of Brno and as a party member started his academic career at the same university. In the early 1990s he became known as the author of some successful textbooks (e.g. *Introduction to Sociology*, 1991, which was popular among university students for the next twenty years; interestingly it did not mention Marx at all). Somewhat later he became a leading theoretician of the Czech young environmentalists (particularly Movement Rainbow, *Hnutí Duha*, from

¹⁴ O. Krejčí, "Skutečná mravnost je sociálně aktivní," *Haló noviny* November 17, 1992, 4.

Brno).¹⁵ His best known book published at that time *Až na dno blahobytu* [The Bottom of Affluence, 1993], represents a kind of manifesto refusing the modern consumerist society, prophesying its social collapse and calling for the decentralization and renewal of sustainable and modest way of life. The book has been widely discussed and admired in the circles of radical environmentalists. In the late 1990s, Keller moved towards contemporary politics and to the left, becoming one of the most popular commentators of the left-wing daily *Právo*. As a highly productive author publishing one or two books a year and as a vivacious speaker at demonstrations and public lectures, he is one of the best known representatives of the Czech intellectual Left today. Since 2014 he has been a member of European parliament as an independent candidate on the party list of social democrats. In his informal and plebeian style of dress, his hairstyle from the 1980s, and his Moravian accent, he somewhat resembles Slavoj Žižek and his position in the Anglo-Saxon academic world. Keller does not mention Marx as his theoretical inspiration, but refers rather to other classics of sociology (Weber, Durkheim) and particularly the tradition of radical American sociology (Mills) and current European critical sociology (Touraine, Crozier, Beck). He also seems to be heavily influenced by environmentalist thinking (Douthwaite, Bookchin).

The second representative of the same group who identified himself with the Left somewhat later than Keller is Jakub Patočka, a founder of the above mentioned *Hnutí Duha* shortly before the Velvet Revolution and Keller's sociology student in the 1990s. Patočka became known at that time as more of a social activist and an organizer of campaigns against the nuclear power plant Temelín and the destruction of villages in a strip mine rather than as an intellectual. However he proved to be a skilled journalist, and became editor-in-chief of *Literární noviny* in 1999, which adopted a strong environmentalist agenda and later on, a visible leftist position under his leadership. Patočka became involved in Green politics as well. He and his group joined the Greens, an unsuccessful party until that year (2002) and he quickly took a leading position with his comrade from *Hnutí Duha*, Jan Beránek. Patočka was the leader of the party

¹⁵ For the development of Duha see B. Binka, *Zelený extremismus: ideje a mentalita českých environmentálních hnutí* (Brno: Masarykova univerzita, 2009); A. Fagan, *Environment and Democracy in the Czech Republic. The Environmental Movement in the Transition Process* (Cheltenham: Edward Elgar Publishing, 2004); M. Mareš, "Environmental Radicalism and Extremism in Postcommunist Europe," *Journal for the Study of Radicalism* 1 (2008): 91–107.

list in the European elections of 2004, but he did not succeed, winning only 3% of votes for the party. His group was subsequently defeated within the party, which afterwards took a neoliberal course. Patočka remained as editor-in-chief of *Literární noviny* until 2009, when he established the internet journal *Deník referendum*, which along with *Britské listy*, soon became the main internet platform of young Czech leftist intellectuals. He is known for his quasi-authoritarian or, according to some, even sectarian style of leadership.

Over time, many of his collaborators abandoned him and established their own groups (the Independent Social Environmental Movement, *Ne-sehnutí*, split from *Hnutí Duha* in 1997; the weekly *A Dvojka* was established by a part of the editorial board of the *Literární noviny* opposing Patočka's leadership style in 2005). On the other hand, he is considered to be one of the most skilled and productive Czech leftist journalists. As a young man active early in public affairs, Patočka did not have time to deal in depth with social theories and academic matters. He seems to be intellectually inspired mainly by his own Czech teachers: the Czech environmental sociologists Keller and Hana Librová but also by the Czech social-liberal thinking of Masaryk and the tradition of 1968 transmitted to him by a former reform communist and later social democrat Jaroslav Šabata, a promoter of radical democratic ideas in the form of an idiosyncratic concept of neo-democracy (*novodemokracie*).

The fifth group includes the liberals who moved towards the political Left at the turn of the new century or later. It is more precise to speak about individuals in this case. Here we can find two kinds of liberals: some of them sided at the beginning of the 1990s with the camp of Václav Klaus, who was for them a representative of pure liberalism bringing to Czech political culture the badly needed pragmatism without excessive moralizing (or "moral kitsch" in the words of Bělohradský); others supported the tradition of Václav Havel who saw in Klaus's liberalism an arrogance of power and economic interest (having in fact the same roots as Marxism with regards to its economic reductionism) and lacking the respect for the natural environment, culture, and other transcendental issues. The most notable example is here Václav Bělohradský. He studied philosophy in the 1960s at Charles University in Prague and was formed in his opinions by the greatest Czech phenomenologist Jan Patočka and, to a lesser extent, by the prevailing Czech Neo-Marxism represented by Kosík et al. Soon after the Soviet invasion, Bělohradský went into exile in Italy, where he finished his degrees and became a lecturer at the University of Trieste. Unlike most of his Italian generational friends, Bě-

lohradský became a proponent of neoliberalism in the 1970s possibly because of his mistrust of the hegemony of the leftist radicalism at universities, which later proved to be remarkably weak intellectually. Bělohradský also published in émigré journals and his writings were appreciated by Václav Havel and the circle of dissidents around him. Bělohradský returned soon after the Velvet Revolution, becoming a professor at Charles University and an unofficial spokesperson of liberalism (although with a respect to environmental issues). Bělohradský published widely in support of liberal capitalism at that time. A collection of his articles was published under the title *Kapitalismus a občanské ctnosti* [Capitalism and the Civic Virtues, 1992]. He nevertheless changed his mind during the late 1990s and became a leading representative of the intellectual Left associated like Keller and Kosík with the daily *Právo*. Bělohradský often mentions his inspiration by the phenomenological tradition of Jan Patočka and Husserl, where earlier he also admitted the influence of Hayek and postmodern thinkers such as Derrida or Lyotard.

Velvet Revolution, Capitalist Transformation, the Splitting of Czechoslovakia, and the Klaus Years

For most of the authors under examination, the Velvet Revolution was a welcome event. The possible exception was Oskar Krejčí, belonging to the communist *nomenklatura*. Yet even he was well aware of the necessity of reform and, as he claimed in 1993, the fact that he belonged to those who lost in the democratic revolution does not mean that he identified himself with the power elite of the *ancien régime*.¹⁶ However during the year 1990, the intellectuals associated with the Prague Spring (Sviták, Kosík) and non-communist radicals (Bondy), became more and more critical of the post-revolutionary changes as it was clear that it was not a democratic socialism that was to be built. Sviták became a staunch opponent of the new regime not least because he could not fulfill his political ambition in 1990. Eager to run in the general elections on the list of the main political force of the democratic revolution, the Civic Forum (*Občanské fórum*, OF), he was refused by the authorities due to his U.S.-citizenship. He believed this to be an intrigue organized by Václav Havel, who disliked Sviták and argued against his views in exile journals well before 1989. In his articles as far back as October 1990, Sviták started to

¹⁶ Krejčí, "Skutečná mravnost je sociálně aktivní," 1.

criticize the planned economic reforms of Václav Klaus, which he viewed as a renewal of the nineteenth century capitalism, and he wrote a letter to the congress of the Communist party calling for the cooperation of Communist, Socialists and Social Democrats against the attempts to “restore capitalism.” His main publication platform remained afterwards *Rudé Právo*, a former central press organ of the Communist party, which emancipated itself from party influence in 1991 and declared itself as an “independent leftist daily.” Bondy also published a few articles in the same daily warning against the “restoration of capitalism” and against the shift to the right-wing dictatorship that he expected to form in the near future (the first of them was published in January 1991). Bondy showed, in contrast to Sviták even, anarchist sympathies: he welcomed the protest against the pompous “Ball in Opera” on February 1992, which he called in a poem “the ball of vampires.”¹⁷ According to some personal testimonies, Kosík was similarly critical of the renewal of capitalism from very early on, but he remained silent on these issues until 1992. On the other hand, Bělohradský, who later became the leading voice of the Czech intellectual Left, profiled himself as one of the main proponents of the swift transformation towards the free market economy and he was even involved in the formulation of the party program of the Civic Democratic party (*Občanská demokratická strana*, ODS) headed by Václav Klaus which started to be seen as a main pro-reform force in Czech politics. It would be however wrong to count him among the staunch Right, in other articles from this time he showed remarkable tolerance towards Left¹⁸ and he even admitted a certain closeness of his liberalism to anarchism.

In 1992, the crisis of the common Czech and Slovak state reached its culmination as the Czech and Slovak ruling elites were unable to develop an administrative model acceptable to both sides. This development was interpreted by the Czech mainstream as a result of growing Slovak nationalism. By contrast the Czech Left saw the crisis as the outcome of the Prague-centric neoliberal politics. Three of the selected intellectuals, Bondy, Sviták, and Kosík, defended the common state in public (possible, in their view, as a confederation) along with sensitivity to social concerns and gradual economic transformation. Their warnings against right-wing politics and the division of the common state also had a certain nationalist

¹⁷ E. Bondy, *Ples upírů*, (München: Obrys/Kontur – PmD, 1995), 14.

¹⁸ V. Bělohradský, “Levice po stažení sovětské vlajky,” *Mladá fronta Dnes*, January 28, 1992, 7, Idem, “Levice za vymírání světlušek,” *Mladá fronta Dnes*, January 29, 1992, 7; Idem, “Levice v planetární době,” *Mladá fronta Dnes*, January 30, 1992, 7.

connotation in the claim that a weak Czech Republic would soon fall prey to Germany. All of them, therefore, saw the end of Czechoslovakia in December 1992 as their personal defeat. Bondy for example angrily commented on the division in one of his poems: "In 45 minutes, the state will cease to exist, where I was born and lived, the rabble from the whole world came to see it, and celebrate it with the Czech yuppies and mafia-capitalists..."¹⁹ The third representative of the Prague Spring generation of the Czech Left, Karel Kosík, finally decided at that moment to speak openly against capitalism and the dissolution of Czechoslovakia. In his essay published in the liberal weekly *Literární noviny*, he called it the "third Munich" in the sense that it was a continuation of national catastrophes: i.e. the Munich agreement of 1938 and the Soviet invasion of 1968, and finally the break-up of the state.²⁰ He repeated the same arguments in the interview "Farce in our cave"²¹ one month later. Not surprisingly Kosík got plenty of negative reactions from readers, among them Bělohradský, who responded with an essay "The anti-spirit on the Charles Bridge" where he assigned Kosík to the tradition of Czech anti-liberalism and accused him of "totalitarian," "Czech revivalist" (in fact nationalist) and Eurocentric tendencies.²² Bělohradský added Kosík to the Czech anti-liberal tradition together with T.G. Masaryk, writer Karel Čapek or a nationalist-communist intellectual Zdeněk Nejedlý and against them he esteemed Václav Klaus as "the first Czech really revivalist politician who emancipated Czech politics from the anti-liberal fundamentalism." After this tough criticism, Kosík ceased to publish in widely accessible journals. He later complained that his essays in *Literární noviny* were censored by the editorial board.²³

After the dissolution of Czechoslovakia, the three analyzed Czech leftist intellectuals became rather silent in public. Bondy living in Bratislava devoted his time to writing novels, Kosík also moved to privacy, and Sviták died in 1994. Krejčí gave occasional interviews to *Rudé Právo* and the communist daily *Haló noviny*, but he devoted most of his time to academic work. Post-revolutionary euphoria, in which also the Left enthusiastically organized itself and transmitted their messages, was replaced

¹⁹ Bondy, *Ples upírů*, 30–31.

²⁰ K. Kosík, *Století Markéty Samsové* (Prague: Český spisovatel, 1993), 156.

²¹ K. Kosík, "Fraška v naší jeskyni", *Lidové noviny*, supplement *Nedělní Lidové noviny* August 29, 1992, 2.

²² V. Bělohradský, "Antiduch na Karlově mostě," *Literární noviny* 44 (1992): 1.

²³ Z. Pavelka, "Připravený vykladač doby," *A dvojka* 16 (2010): 36.

after 1993 by a stabilization of the new regime and right-wing ideological hegemony. It seemed so strong that there were doubts whether the Czech intellectual Left would become influential within the following decades. Young Czech Marxist-Freudian Jan Štern named this time, in 2009, the “dark nineties” for the intellectual Left.²⁴ Bělohradský was still on the other side of the political spectrum: He was interviewed often by the mainstream journals, where he argued for a deepening of the capitalist principles in society, declaring himself as a “pro-capitalist philosopher.”²⁵ He even called for further marketization being to him a way of liberation. In the article “Homage to McDonaldization of the world,” he refuted the critics of the McDonalds fast-food chain and highlighted the democratization potential of such places which allow the destruction of class barriers, liberation from conservative norms of behavior, etc.²⁶ Keller and Patočka did not engage in the discussions on the economic transformation or dissolution of Czechoslovakia, and devoted their writing to environmental issues. Patočka’s political views at that time illustrate his critique of anarchists who participated in the camp against the nuclear power plant at Temelín in 1996, but as they put on the gate of the plant the inscription “death to capitalism,” Patočka and his followers removed it.²⁷ He and his movement had a remarkably close relationship to the liberal-conservative Civil Democratic Alliance (*Občanská demokratická alliance*, ODA), which tried to adopt a slightly environmental program in order to distinguish itself from the market-liberal ODS.²⁸ Keller, known at that time as leading thinker of environmental *Hnutí Duha*, was in his work *Šok z ekologie* [Shock from ecology] as critical towards socialism as towards liberalism and conservatism.²⁹ One could even characterize him as conservative in character, for he glorified the traditional societies that “kept the environmental equilibrium.”³⁰

²⁴ According to him, his thought at that time was that “...crowds were rushing to the abyss and wise men were encouraging them... it was a time to vomit... I knew only a few men who were able to name, to articulate, to accuse. I was trying to learn from them how to write and how not to believe.” J. Štern, *Mystika Západu* (Prague: Malvern, 2009), 2.

²⁵ V. Bělohradský, “Věřím v blue jeans,” *Reflex* 48 (1994): 18–20.

²⁶ V. Bělohradský, “Hamburger & džiny & demokracie: Chvála mcdonaldizace světa,” *Respekt* 4 (1994): 14.

²⁷ M. Mazel, “Radikální a extrémistické politické organizace v České republice” in *Politický extremismus a radikalismus v České republice*, ed. P. Fiala (Brno: Masarykova universita, 1998), 169.

²⁸ P. Pečínka, “Levicová mládež - ghetto nebo perspektiva,” *Listy* 2 (1995): 85.

²⁹ J. Keller, *Šok z ekologie* (Prague: Český spisovatel, 1996), 36–41.

³⁰ Pečínka, “Levicová mládež...,” 85.

Economic Depression and the Crisis of the Czech Right: 1997–1998

The signals of change occurred in 1996. The “Czech economic miracle” under Václav Klaus got its first stains, the economy began to stagnate, economic criminality spread, and unemployment started to rise. Klaus’s government lost its majority in the elections of 1996, although he still succeeded in forming a new government, mainly because the opposition was deeply divided. It was more and more visible that an important part of the public started to be unhappy with Klaus’s arrogant political style and his refusals to pay attention to the legal aspects of transformation. The public discontent led to growing support for social democracy, which became the second strongest political power in Czechia in 1996. In November 1997, the ministers of the coalition parties left the government and Klaus was forced to resign. In 1998 the Czech Social Democrats won the premature parliamentary elections and formed its own government, albeit with the support of Klaus’s Civic Democratic Party (ODS), which remained an influential power in Czech politics.³¹ The turning mood in society was symbolized by the reactions to the essay-interview by Karel Kosík “Lumpenbourgeoisie and higher spiritual truth” published in *Právo* in March 1997. (In 1995 the daily *Rudé Právo* decided to abandon the adjective “*rudé*” [red] in order to dissociate itself from its communist roots.) Kosík refused the restoration of capitalism, globalized “supercapital” (his essay was in fact one of the first domestic leftist critique of globalization), “production of emptiness and sterility,” decline of culture and education, arrogance of the rightist ideology, “idiotization” of mass media, empty language of politics, and general superficiality.³² Quite surprisingly Kosík dared to speak again about a class in Marxist sense, which he called the “lumpenbourgeoisie.” He defined it as a group integrating business and mafia activities and creating a climate in which the white-collar criminality was becoming normal. He also refused the idea of “Czech statehood,” claiming that at its birth stood the “cynical pragmatism combined with empty moralizing.”³³ Kosík’s essay was criticized again by some liberal authors,³⁴ but this time it found much more friendly readers than his texts published five years before. Kosík became for

³¹ For a well written introduction to the events of the late 90s see S. Saxonberg, *The Czech Republic before the new millennium: politics, parties and gender* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2003).

³² K. Kosík, *Předpotopní úvahy* (Prague: Torst, 1997), 249.

³³ Ibidem, 253.

³⁴ I. Klíma, “Konec marxistův v Čechách,” *Lidové noviny*, July 16, 1997, 9.

the next three years the most popular intellectual contributing to *Právo*, where he published about twenty essays.³⁵ At the end of the same year, Bělohradský gave an interview to this daily under the title “Capitalism did not have its glasnost and perestroika yet.”³⁶ Here he refused the so called “moral kitsch,” that he saw prevailing in Czech public discourse, which interpreted politics as “the seeking of truth and morality” and thus made it impossible to establish a rational political discourse. Second Bělohradský questioned the image of Western civilization as a winner over communism and he criticized globalization, which he described as “smaller and smaller number of companies and financial gurus deciding about the fate of the planet.” In the same year, Keller also published his first article in *Právo* and since then he became a regular commentator. Oskar Krejčí too used the political and economic crisis to present again his critical views and he published a new book under the symptomatic title *Povaha dnešní krize* [The nature of contemporary crisis, 1998]. According to him, Czech society was lacking responsible elites who would be able to formulate a consensual program and work together for the purposes of national community not individual ones. In such a situation, the young generation can easily come to the conclusion that the whole endeavor of the Czech national revival in the nineteenth century was a mistake.

Protests against Globalization: 1998–2000

An important step in the development of the intellectual Left, and more specifically the leftist social movement, proved to be the movement against globalization in 1998–2000. It became a widely discussed issue in the media after the protest in Seattle in November 1999, where thousands

³⁵ When Kosík died in 2003 the mainstream press published memorial articles which contrasted to the death of Sviták, who was considered, due to his open support for the Communist party, as persona non grata. In the case of Kosík, it was regretted that he did not want to hear or see, what did not correspond with his views and he “lost the ability to name and he communicated rather emotions.” The saddest thing about Kosík was, according to the author of the right-wing *Mladá fronta Dnes*, that the communists identified themselves with him currently. See J. Chuchma, “Filozof v kozelci významů a emocí,” *Mladá fronta dnes*, March 1, 2003, 6. On the other hand Jan Keller praised his essays, where Kosík indicated what does it mean if “the capital speaks on freedom and humanity” and how “we transform each other from servants to servants.” See J. Keller, “A tak se díváš a vidíš, růže pro filosofa,” *Právo*, February 27, 2003, 2.

³⁶ V. Bělohradský, “Kapitalismus glasnost’ a perestrojka teprve čeká” in “Salon” supplement to *Právo*, November 6, 1997, 1 and 3.

of anti-global activists effectively disrupted the ministerial conference of the World Trade Organization. The first anti-globalist action in the Czech Republic, the “global street party” in Prague, was organized in May 1998 by anarchists and radical environmentalists as a part of a global protest movement against the policy of the WTO. The Prague demonstration ended up in violent clashes with the police. The demonstration was an important turning point in the development of the social movement because it saw more participants than ever before (about three thousand), and it first articulated the concept of “globalization” and the necessity to protest against it.³⁷ From our sample of authors only Jakub Patočka raised his voice in defending the street party, possibly because it was highly negatively presented in the mainstream media. Patočka refused the arguments of the young right-wing journalist Roman Joch who demanded in his article “The sound of loaded guns, or how to behave towards the plundering mob” for a shooting at the protestors with gum projectiles “in the name of freedom and civilization.”³⁸ Patočka nevertheless stated that “no one will see me at the local street party, because the anarchists who were among the organizers are one of the dangers to democracy.”³⁹

Another important event and possibly a turning point in the development of the Czech Left movement was the 2000 IMF summit in Prague. As in Seattle, many anti-global activists from Western countries came to the Czech capital to protest. The demonstrations against the IMF were accompanied by violence on both sides, and the local mass media used it as a wide criticism of the anti-globalist movement.⁴⁰ Keller and Kosík accepted the invitation to speak at the counter-summit together with Naomi Klein and other international anti-globalization stars (Kosík did not come in the end, officially due to health problems and more likely because of his introverted nature). Bondy made a public appearance as

³⁷ S. Rubeš, *Global Street Party – Ohlédnutí po 10 letech*, <http://www.csaf.cz/index.php?clanok=833>, accessed January 30, 2014.

³⁸ R. Joch, “Zvuk nabíjení pušek - aneb jak se patřičně zachovat k rabující lůze,” *Lidové noviny*, June 1, 1998, 10.

³⁹ J. Patočka, “Spor dlažebních kostek a gumových nábojů,” *Lidové noviny*, August 29, 1998, 10.

⁴⁰ For a more detailed description of the events see O. Císař, *Politický aktivismus v České republice: sociální hnutí a občanská společnost v období transformace a evropeizace* (Brno: CDK, 2008). For the way the protests were pictured in the media see J. Křeček, “Ideologie konsenzu jako praktika pro diskriminaci radikální opozice v mediovaném politickém diskurzu (Případ 'Palachova týdne' a 'týdne MMF')” in *Rozvoj české společnosti v Evropské unii. III. Média. Teritoriální studia*, ed. J. Končelík et al., (Prague: Matfyzpress, 2004), 157–173.

well, but at the communist rally. Neither Bělohradský, Krejčí nor Patočka, participated in the protest, but they expressed sympathies to the movement. After the protests, Patočka refused to join the communist demonstrations and was also highly critical of the anarchist Initiative Against the Economic Globalization (*Iniciativa proti ekonomické globalizaci*, IN-PEG), which he called “incompetent and chaotic people.”⁴¹ He regretted that his *Hnutí Duha* remained conformist and did not try to organize a citizens’ demonstration “against the mafia capitalism in our country and in the world”, a protest movement that would range from environmentalists, to Christians, human rights activists, trade unions, democratic parties, and president Havel.

Protests against joining NATO, the Kosovo War 1999 and the Iraq War: 2003–2006

In 1999, the Czech Republic was accepted as a member to NATO. In the mainstream media, the event was interpreted as a final proof of “our belonging to Western civilization,” whose values Czechs share, and of the definite liberation from the Russian power sphere. The membership was refused by the Communists and the left-wing of the Social Democrats, whereas the environmentalists were neutral or even supported it. From our selected intellectuals, Bondy, Krejčí, and Kosík decried Czech membership in NATO. In the mentioned interview with *Právo* in November 1997, Bělohradský also hesitated to celebrate the expected Czech entry, to the surprise of many, because it was to him “only an attempt to mask the crisis of civilization with the rattling of weapons.”⁴² In 2005 Bělohradský mentioned that NATO membership was a definite turning point for his political views: “Earlier, I believed that the green critique or our economic system will prevail in itself... I was completely wrong. NATO enlargement persuaded me that this is the end of all hope. I crossed the Jordan and became the dissident of the growth of growth.”⁴³ Patočka did not de-

⁴¹ J. Patočka, “První varování,” *Sedmá generace* 10 (2000): 1.

⁴² Bělohradský, “Kapitalismus glasnost’ a perestrojka teprve čeká,” 1 and 3. In the year 2005 the Czech social forum was organized, inspired by the European and world social forum, but the event was not supported by a broad range of organizations, and particularly criticized was the numerous presence of communist politicians. From the scholars we are dealing with only Keller was speaking there.

⁴³ V. Bělohradský, *Demokracie je překonaná forma vlády*, interview with K. Hvižd’ala, <http://aktualne.centrum.cz/rozhovory/clanek.phtml?id=738682>, accessed January 30, 2014.

cry Czech membership in NATO, but he expressed surprise that Václav Havel used “hard rhetoric” in his speech on this topic, making an impression that the USA believes in “excluding everybody who can see things differently.” Patočka stressed that many opponents of NATO and the EU “consisted of true and consistent democrats.”⁴⁴ He, however, still evaluated the whole of Havel’s speech highly positively.

The Kosovo War and the reaction of the social democratic government to it was another important event that mobilized the Czech Left. The government was in a difficult position. It had to balance between the prevailing public opinion refusing to take part in NATO attacks on Serbia and the Czech obligations as a new NATO member. The demonstrations against the war were well attended with thousands of participants, which is rather an exception in Czechia. Václav Havel was one of the few leading Czech politicians to support unconditionally the NATO campaign and even spoke about “humanitarian character of attacks and the bombs”, which was reformulated by journalists to be “humanitarian bombing” and quoted by the opponents of the war. Havel’s popularity declined significantly during the campaign and his positions became criticized by most of the intellectual Left. Most other politicians including Klaus or Zeman had more reserved views towards the war.

From the analyzed authors, Kosík specially spoke against the NATO campaign passionately. The war was also criticized by Bělohradský, Keller, Bondy, and Krejčí, and supported only by Patočka. According to Kosík’s emotional words, “the Czech political representation brought the Czech nation into a dirty war.”⁴⁵ Bělohradský called the conflict somewhat provocatively the “leftist war,” arguing that the Western countries attacking Yugoslavia were led by former left-wing students from the 1960s who wanted to compensate for their unfulfilled revolutionary goals.⁴⁶ In a second interview on the Kosovo War, Bělohradský even called the Americans “the most manipulative, least educated, and least rational nation of the world.”⁴⁷ Bondy claimed that he visited Yugoslavia at that time and was impressed by the courage of Serbs and their ability to resist.⁴⁸

⁴⁴ J. Patočka, “Konečně i v češtině,” *Sedmá generace* 1 (1999): 25.

⁴⁵ K. Kosík, “Čest demokratů je v poctivosti” in “Salon,” supplement to *Právo*, December 23, 1999, 1.

⁴⁶ V. Bělohradský, “Válka v Kosovu je levičácká válka,” *Lidové noviny*, April 10, 1999, 11.

⁴⁷ Idem, “Epocha mezinárodní anarchie,” *Respekt* 18 (1999): 13.

⁴⁸ Bondy even claimed that he traveled mainly on foot there, which must be understood as his poetic license possibly as his whole trip to Yugoslavia. E. Bondy, “V boji proti kapi-

Kosík, Keller, and Bělohradský signed an open letter from Czech intellectuals calling for an immediate cease-fire. Other names in the documents show that this was the last occasion when the intellectuals of the Prague Spring raised their voices together.⁴⁹ A few years later, during the Iraq war, this group was no longer able to mobilize and its leading voice, Kosík, was dead. Keller, who called the bombing “the least intelligent way to overthrow Milosevic”, resigned from the editorial board of the journal *Sedmá generace* (Seventh generation) published by *Hnutí Duha*, because the organization supported the war.⁵⁰ The leader of *Hnutí Duha* and chief editor of *Literární noviny*, Patočka, decided to accept the NATO attacks, following Havel and other center-right liberal politicians. He argued that Kosík is “deeply failing” in his anti-war essay, because he is ignoring the basic facts and Bělohradský is simply “anti-American.” According to Patočka, the solidarity with Serbs in regard to Kosovo was intertwined with Czech nationalism and with Czech anti-gypsy resentments, which are very similar to Serbian anti-Albanian ones. Patočka wrote that it was not surprising that those against the war were also those who defended the ethnic purges of Sudeten Germans after WWII, or supported the opening of the nuclear power plant at Temelín. It was a coalition of left-wing and right-wing nationalists that were aiming to set up the “national authoritarian state.”⁵¹

Four years later, during the outbreak of the Iraq war in 2003, the situation was quite different. Similar to 1999, in this war the Czech Republic supported the “coalition of the willing,” but the government sent only a mobile military field hospital to Iraq and the political representatives expressed different opinions on the question of whether the Czech Republic should participate or not (Havel was again a staunch proponent). In contrast to the Kosovo War, the demonstrations were not as numerous, with only hundreds of participants, possibly due to the cultural distance of Iraq and Czechia. What was new was an attempt to organize a public initiative against the war, although the anti-war actions were still divided between the pro-communist and non-communist antiwar activities. This time the Czech left-wing intellectuals led by Jan Keller formulated a public appeal

talismu nelze být pokryteckými humanisty,” interview with O. Slačálek, <http://blisty.cz/art/36358.html>, accessed January 30, 2014.

⁴⁹ “Intelektuálové pro okamžité zastavení války v Jugoslávii.” *Právo*, May 3, 1999, 3. The letter was signed among others by Pavel Machonin, Jaroslav Opat, Eduard Golstücker, František Šmalík, Čestmír Císar, Miloš Bárta.

⁵⁰ J. Keller, “Major Zeman můj vzor nebyl,” *Pátek Magazín LN*, October 22, 1999, 18.

⁵¹ J. Patočka, “Kosovské zrcadlo čili Jací jsme?,” *Literární noviny* 19 (1999): 1.

protesting against the war called “Not in our name.” Bělohradský also protested, speaking against “Bushism,” calling it “a hard alloy of business, kitsch, hypocrisy, and fundamentalism, which is unable to gain a view of itself from outside.”⁵² In an interview in 2005, Bělohradský spoke in a way unimaginable five years before: “Lying vulgates about the victorious crusade of democrats against the enemies of freedom serves only to push out the real problems from the public space. And they are: the ecological crisis, the imperialist foreign policy of the USA, the pro-American obligingness of post-communist countries, the crisis of the EU, and primarily, the third world and the different Holocausts which we organized there during the cold war.”⁵³ This time Patočka also stood up against the war. He claimed: “The United States did not give any proof that Iraq is hiding the weapons of mass destruction, or that Iraq supported terrorism. On the other hand, the USA showed that their relationship to democracy does not give them a right to lead a war in other lands....”⁵⁴ Patočka even called Bush’s government “incompetent and cynical.”

Protest against the U.S. radar base: 2006–2009

The most important turning point in the development of the Czech post-communist intellectual Left, finally, seems to be the movement against the plan to build the U.S. radar base, a part of the U.S. military defense system, in Brdy hills, a military area 50 kms south west of Prague. The negotiations between the Czech and the U.S. governments had already started under the social democratic government but were kept in secret. The first information about the plan appeared in the media after the elections of 2006. Opinion polls again showed very low public support for the project. The communists and, after certain doubts, the Social Democrats (being at the time already in opposition) refused the project unambiguously. The Greens, now a part of the right-wing ruling coalition, were deeply divided on this issue. Very soon the civil initiative No to bases (*Ne základnám*) was founded and gained remarkable public support, with almost ten thousand protesting people on Wenceslas Square in Prague at its peak in 2008, where the Slovenian philosopher Slavoj Žižek spoke against the plan. The initiative *Ne základnám* embraced a wide range of political forces ranging

⁵² V. Bělohradský, *Společnost nevolnosti* (Prague: Slon, 2007), 214.

⁵³ Bělohradský, *Demokracie je překonaná forma vlády*.

⁵⁴ J. Patočka, “Mír v rukou Evropy?,” *Literární noviny* 2 (2003): 1.

from communists to the left-wing Greens, thus overcoming for the first time the internal schism between communist and the non-communist Left. Its success can also be explained by the fact that the radar issue combined a local and the national agenda. The radar base was seen as potentially damaging the nature of the Brdy hills as a symbol of country subordination to a foreign power. It also had a global level: the campaign was perceived as part of the global movement against imperialist U.S. policy. In contrast to the anti-globalization campaign in 1998–2000, which remained isolated from the broader Czech public, the anti-radar campaign was more successful, because it integrated important narratives from modern Czech history such as the proverbial “Munich betrayal,” the Soviet invasion of 1968 and deployment of its troops on Czechoslovak territory up to 1991. The strong social mobilization against the plan contributed to the postponement of the final signature of the agreement between the Czech and U.S. governments. It most likely also influenced the new American administration under Barack Obama, who decided to cancel it. The campaign against the “Radar” can be considered the only victory of the Czech left-wing social movement since 1989.⁵⁵ The public appeal *Ne základnám* obtained immediate support from all the analyzed intellectuals. Krejčí and Keller participated particularly actively.

Protests against the Neoliberal Government after 2010

The last stage of the development of the Czech leftist intellectual scene and social movements can be seen after the unexpected electoral victory of the neoliberal and conservative Right to power in the election of 2010. Bělohradský reacted to the election results with an essay “Five lessons from the May election.” Among other points he argued that the public should realize that people are easier to manipulate than expected. He tried to introduce here a new political term “the rabble political discourse,” which contained individualism, cynicism, vulgarism, and anti-communism, and which, in his opinion, was prevailing not only in the blogosphere but appeared in the printed media or on the TV and was therefore shared by so-called cultural elites and a remarkable part of the young generation. He sees a clear continuity with the current “rabble

⁵⁵ More documents on it can be found in J. Maštálka, J. Neoral, P. Cironis, *Boj o kótu 718: kronika protestu občanů ČR proti výstavbě amerického radaru v Brdech 2007–2009* (Trokavec: Obec Trokavec, 2012).

discourse” and the writings of the political Right during the so-called Second Republic, the authoritarian short-lived rump-state existing between the Munich agreement in September 1938 and the Nazi occupation of March 1939. Bělohradský characterized the electoral campaign of the Right as a “class-struggle” in which the rich, “organized as a class in the Leninist sense” with most of the media on their side, won over the poor.⁵⁶ As a spontaneous reaction to the victory of the right-wing parties, a public initiative ProAlt (For Alternatives) was formed where many young intellectuals from the Social Democrats, radical left groupings, and Green party members found a platform. Its most visible face became the sociologist Tereza Stöckelová (*1977). Activists closer to the communist Left, openly professing anti-capitalist ideals founded a similar initiative called Community of Work and Solidarity (*Společenství práce a solidarity*, SPAS), which also allowed a membership for organizations. Its most well-known speaker became the economist Ilona Švihlíková (*1977). Both organizations cooperated closely with the trade unions. ProAlt focused on the issues of university reforms, specifically campaigning against the plan to introduce study fees. Around these activities, a new generation of leftist authors further developed, although they had been active in one way or another already since the beginning of 2000s. We can mention here the philosopher Michael Hauser (*1972), the political scientist Ondřej Slačálek (*1982) and the philosopher Martin Škabara (*1979).

Relationship towards Political Parties

Another formative issue discussed by the analyzed intellectuals was their relationship to existing political parties, particularly to Liberal forces, Greens, Social Democrats and Communists. As we know, during the 1990s, three authors from our sample (Bělohradský, Patočka, and Keller) supported the liberal parties. Bělohradský sympathized with the Civic Democratic Party until 1996, Patočka most probably with the Civic Democratic Alliance until 1997, later with certain politicians from the Christian People’s Party and the liberal Union of Freedom (his *Literární noviny* interviewed in 1999–2002 mainly the politicians from these parties). Also, Keller likely felt a programmatic affiliation with the social liberal Civic Movement in 1992 and its successor party in 1996, as indicated by his

⁵⁶ V. Bělohradský, “Pět poučení z květnových voleb,” *Právo*, July 3, 2010, 10.

high appreciation of Minister of Environment Josef Vavroušek belonging to this force⁵⁷ and its political program in 1996.⁵⁸

This situation changed around the turn of the century, when the intellectuals of our focus started to express their sympathies with the Green party or with the Social Democrats. The Green party, established already in 1989, remained until 2003 a politically insignificant force. Nevertheless during the years 2003–2006, it seemed to form a newly crystallized core of the Czech social-liberal politics that attracted the attention of the intellectuals. Patočka and Bělohradský declared their support for it.⁵⁹ As Patočka became one of the leaders of the Green Party in 2003, he started to develop the idea of a possible Green-Social-Democratic-Liberal alliance. Yet after he was defeated in the party's internal struggle, he changed his support to the Social Democrats in 2006. More generally once the Greens entered the parliament and joined the neoliberal coalition, the above-mentioned intellectuals declined their support and oriented themselves towards the Social Democrats. After their unsuccessful government participation and their defeat in the elections of 2010, the potential of the Greens seems to have been destroyed for a long time and there are no signals of a possible reversal of the trend. Some authors from our sample, mainly those declaring themselves since 1989 to be “left” (Krejčí, Sviták, Bondy) never expressed their support for the Greens and preferred to consider it always a Trojan horse of the Right. Also, Keller moved quickly to the left after 1998 and never saw the Green party as a new progressive force in the Czech politics.⁶⁰

Social democracy, which was renewed during the Velvet Revolution, entered parliament in 1992, dominated the left spectrum of Czech politics since 1996, and led the government in the years 1998–2006.⁶¹ The party however was lacking the support of intellectuals and cultural elites. Most of the authors analyzed here only started to support it after 2005. Patočka and Bělohradský showed some sympathies for the liberal wing of the party at the beginning of 2000s and, during the next years, they became direct supporters and even started to prefer its “idealist” wing, which was critical of

⁵⁷ J. Keller, *Přemýšlení s Josefem Vavrouškem* (Prague: G a G, 1996).

⁵⁸ J. Keller, *Naše cesta do prvoroh* (Prague: Slon, 1998), 114.

⁵⁹ V. Bělohradský, “Proč volit Stranu zelených,” *Právo*, May 6, 2006, 14.

⁶⁰ J. Keller, “Zelená hodina pravdy,” *Právo*, June 22, 2006, 9. For a detailed description of the Green party see P. Pečinka, *Zelená zleva: historie ekologických stran v Evropě* (Prague: G plus G, 2002).

⁶¹ On social democracy see J. Bureš, J. Charvát, P. Just et al., *Levice v České republice a na Slovensku 1989-2009* (Plzeň: Vydavatelství a nakladatelství Aleš Čeněk, 2010).

the existing capitalism and the sharing of neoliberal cultural values. Since that time they also called for the cooperation of the party not only with the centrist and liberal powers but also with the Communists. Patočka supported the Social Democrats openly for the first time in 2006, and he spoke in favor of minority social democratic government supported by the Communists.⁶² Here it is worth mentioning that the isolation of the Communist party at the parliamentary level belonged to the political consensus since the beginning of the 1990s, shared even by Social Democrats. The idea of taking Communists to the government or of bidding for their silent government support was seen as dangerous to democracy. This consensus started to evaporate in the years 2006–2010. In 2010, Patočka backed the Social Democrats almost unconditionally and he favored the social democratic government supported by the Communists as the best solution. Similarly Bělohradský supported the “Left”⁶³ openly for the first time in 2010. He also castigated the statement of the Czech greens that they were not leftist. Bělohradský called this position “cowardly” because “it only supports the widely shared usage of the term “leftist” to intimidate every critic of the system.” Voting for the Left hopefully “will open our eyes to see the non-transparency and omnipresence of the system of criminal capitalism.”⁶⁴ Others of the analyzed intellectuals supported rather the populist and traditionalist wing of the party. An example is Sviták’s writing shortly before his death in favor of Zeman, or Krejčí who had established vivid contacts with the party chairmen Zeman and Paroubek respectively since the late 1990s.

A changing tendency showed a similar relationship of the analyzed authors towards the Communists, who did not transform themselves significantly after the Velvet Revolution. They kept their name as the only significant CP outside the former Soviet Union, and at the same time they remained a politically significant force with electoral support ranging constantly between about 10–15 % of votes. Although it was expected in the 1990s that the party would “die out,” this did not happen, and at the turn of the century, there were even signals of its growing support. The heyday for the party came in the elections of 2002, when it gained almost one-fifth of the votes. Even though the victorious Social Democrats decided to form the government with the central and liberal parties, the Communists contributed to the election of Václav Klaus to be the President of the Republic in 2003.

⁶² J. Patočka, “Volby bez idealismu,” *Literární noviny* 22 (2006): 9.

⁶³ V. Bělohradský, “Čtyři důvody, proč volit levici,” *Právo*, May 19, 2010, 7.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*

The analyzed intellectuals and circles around them developed their relationship towards the Communists in somewhat differing ways. As we know, Sviták and Bondy supported the Czech Communists as soon as 1991–1992, but as Czech politics stabilized and the Communists employed strong nostalgic motives in their ideology, their relationship cooled. Still Bondy spoke at the Party congress in 1999 warning against the “global genocide prepared by the multinational organizations” and in personal talks against the possible social democratization of the party. Krejčí remained on friendly terms with the Party throughout the whole period, and from time to time gave interviews to the Party press and spoke at Party seminars. He nevertheless kept a certain distance as an “independent political scientist.” Kosík was admired in the Party after he started publishing his critical essays in *Právo*, yet even though he was invited to speak on the Party platform a few times, he never did so. The first author who showed a friendly relationship to the Party in the early 2000s was Keller (being a member till 1990), who gave a first interview to the Party daily in 2000,⁶⁵ and since 2002, has spoken regularly at Party seminars. His lectures were published as articles in Party journals. In 2002 Keller expressed his contentment with the electoral victory of the Communists and Social Democrats and has remained on friendly terms with the Party until today.⁶⁶ As a reaction to an anti-communist petition in 2003, Keller, together with a few other leftist intellectuals, formulated the petition “We do not speak to the rightists.”⁶⁷ Bělohradský, during his “pro-capitalist years,” never expressed an anti-communist stance, and in the essay published in *Právo* in 1998, he spoke about the “unjust media machinery”, presenting communism as “the biggest evil of the century.” He argued to the contrary that “there was much which was good and truthful in it, communism was only lacking the patience to the non-rigid human experiences that are saying no to big theories.”⁶⁸ Bělohradský however, never gave an interview to the communist press and never spoke at the seminars organized by the Communist party. Patočka, similar to Bělohradský, developed from Green liberal to left liberal during the 2000s and in the end supported the de-demonization of the Communists and

⁶⁵ J. Keller, “Je třeba opustit řeči o nutnosti a správnosti globalizace,” in “Společnost, kultura, ekonomika,” supplement to *Haló noviny*, May 15, 2000, 1.

⁶⁶ J. Keller, “Jako sociolog mám důvod být s volebními výsledky spokojen” in “Společnost, kultura, ekonomika,” supplement to *Haló noviny*, June 24, 2002, 1.

⁶⁷ *S pravičáky se nemluví*, <http://blisty.cz/art/16137.html>, accessed January 30, 2014.

⁶⁸ V. Bělohradský, “Vše trvalé se mění v páru, vše posvátné se znesvěcuje” in “Salon,” supplement to *Právo*, March 12, 1998, 1 and 3.

their possible cooperation with the Social Democrats. In 1996 he reacted harshly to the success of two Communist candidates in the Senate election saying that “everybody respecting freedom, nature, or good inter-human relations must feel regret, distaste and shame.”⁶⁹ In 1999, he still shared the rule of the mainstream discourse dividing the “democratic” and “non-democratic” parties (i. e. the Communists) in the parliament.⁷⁰ However, the next year he wrote his first article calling for the formation of a Left-liberal government with the support of the Communists despite the fact that he still called them “repulsive.”⁷¹ Patočka also did not give interviews to the Communist party press (or was not asked for them?) and he never spoke at any events organized by the Communist party.

Liberal Consensus and the Nation

The last issue to be discussed is the relationship of our intellectuals to the two crucial topics of the transformation period: the so-called liberal consensus and the concept of the nation. Under the “liberal consensus” we can understand the widely shared understanding of the majority of political actors at the beginning of the post-socialist period that saw in vaguely defined liberalism and liberal values not just a political ideology, but something more deeply and substantially connected with democracy, free market, civic freedom, and human rights. This view, rooted in the political discourses of the anti-communist opposition before 1989, became extraordinarily influential in the Czech post-communist discussion. Thus to refuse liberalism, so to say, meant a danger of being accused of refusing democracy. For many thinkers there was a dilemma: either to accept the unwritten yet widely shared “liberal consensus” and thus to accept that their social critique must be limited or to refuse it and face the danger of being labeled as the enemies of democracy.

In our sample there is a group who did not call themselves liberals and refused to identify liberalism with democracy. This was a position of Kosík, Sviták, Bondy, and Krejčí. These authors declared themselves to be either Marxist, anti-capitalist (Bondy), socialist (Sviták), or simply “humanists” (Krejčí). Kosík was somewhat hesitant to accept a label, but he wrote a few times that he is still following the program of the Prague

⁶⁹ J. Patočka, “Několik vět k těm dvěma,” *Poslední generace* 12 (1996): 25.

⁷⁰ J. Patočka, “Klausův haiderovský program,” *Sedmá generace* 2 (1999): 28.

⁷¹ J. Patočka, “Jděte do toho,” *Lidové noviny*, February 2, 2000.

Spring which he characterized as the “burgeoning of historical alternative”⁷² (to Stalinist or state socialism and Western liberal capitalism). In the formulation of this group, we do not find the explicit refusals of liberalism, rather a pondering upon its visible limits, and the fact that its marriage with democracy was quite a new thing.⁷³ Krejčí also spoke against “the extreme liberalism in the economy, which delegates absolute power to the market and destroys rationality and morality.”⁷⁴ Kosík did not refuse liberalism explicitly, but he spoke “about the new ruling ideology, which is a mixture of pragmatism and moralizing”⁷⁵ and which he called simply the signifier “market” (*trh*), speaking also against postmodernism. Jakub Patočka and Jan Keller also did not like liberal labels and criticized the vision of an “unregulated market,” from the very beginning, although they accepted, as did the former authors, the notions of human rights and democracy as an unquestioned starting point. For Keller, liberalism was one of the ideologies destroying nature to the same extent as did socialism or conservatism. Patočka attempted in his first texts to position nature and civic freedom against the unregulated markets, but did not conceptualize the notion of “liberal” at all. On the other hand, in the 1990s Bělohradský believed in the ideal of liberalism and he has insisted on this label and its belonging to liberal tradition until a recent declaration of an affiliation to the Left. In 2005, Bělohradský called his ideal as “lib-lab” meaning that the Liberal and Social Democratic parties are continually changing in their ability to exert power. When the Social Democrats were stronger in the 1970s and 1980s, he as a critical intellectual sided with the liberals, whereas now that the liberals are winning, he is on the social democratic side.⁷⁶

The second question that needs to be raised here is the relationship of the analyzed authors to the notion of nation and patriotism. The term nation was not used much during the first transformation years, being negatively burdened by the language of communism (e.g. the socialist patriotism), and nationalism was considered problematic, and something not belonging to democratic Europe.⁷⁷ The Velvet Revolution did not define

⁷² Kosík, *Předpotopní úvahy*, 247.

⁷³ O. Krejčí, *Proč to prasklo aneb hovory o „sametové revoluci“* (Prague: Trio, 1991), 20.

⁷⁴ Krejčí, *Proč to prasklo*, 108.

⁷⁵ K. Kosík, “Třetí Mnichov” [1992] in *Století Markéty Samsové*, 159.

⁷⁶ V. Bělohradský, *Ted' je dějinytvornou silou levice*, interview with Karel Hvižd'ala, <http://aktualne.centrum.cz/blogy-a-nazory/komentare/clanek.phtml?id=737773>, accessed January 30, 2014.

⁷⁷ There are two terms in the Czech language: *vlastenectví*, which can be described as moderate, positive, and peaceful (being proud one's own nation) but was also discred-

itself as nationalistic, but rather as a “citizens’” event although some authors identified a certain amount of nationalism at play during the revolution as well.⁷⁸ The Czech Republic chose not to adopt the nation as the base of the new state the in 1993 preamble of its constitution, in contrast to the Slovak constitution. In 1993, President Václav Havel denied that the Czech Republic had “national interests” and claimed that everyone shared a human interest. Even the prime minister, Václav Klaus was hesitant to use the term nation as an important political category in the first half of the 1990s. The Czech conservative Right started to adopt the nationalist agenda mainly during the accession to the EU (the ODS poster: Nation votes for Klaus in 2002),⁷⁹ while the liberal center, including Václav Havel, remained mistrustful of any nationalist rhetoric. The political Left and extreme Right on the contrary adopted the nationalist agenda much earlier (the Communists to a stronger extent than the Social Democrats) mainly in the form of anti-German stereotypes, understanding the EU as a project of German hegemony.⁸⁰

The analyzed group of thinkers differed substantially on the issue of the nation and its usefulness in political analyses and political mobilization. At the beginning, a nationalist agenda in one way or another was adopted by explicitly leftist authors such as Sviták and Krejčí and to some extent Bondy and Kosík, who saw themselves as the bearers of Czech quasi-Protestant, republican, and democratic traditions, while the new ruling power was for them rehabilitating the Catholic tradition, and Germanophilic. Sviták frequently used an anti-German card warning against the future neo-colonial status of the Czech lands (he spoke ironically about “becoming the German condom from the Czechoslovak condominium”⁸¹). Krejčí maintained that the current cosmopolitan elites were not conscious enough of the Czech national interests and, in the worst sce-

ited during communism and *nacionalismus* (idea that my nation is better than others), which has a deeply negative connotation.

⁷⁸ L. Holý, *Malý český člověk a skvělý český národ* (Prague: Slon, 2010), 56–61.

⁷⁹ A. Gjuríčová, “Obhajoba národních zájmů v čase východního rozšíření EU. 2002 – „nacionální epizoda“ ODS” in *Kapitoly z dějin české demokracie po roce 1989*, ed. A. Gjuríčová and M. Kopeček (Prague: Paseka 2008), 116–133.

⁸⁰ V. Handl, “Transformace komunistické strany: Od “strategie levicového ústupu” k evropeizaci” in *Kapitoly z dějin české demokracie po roce 1989*, ed. Gjuríčová and Kopeček, 91–115.

⁸¹ I. Sviták, “Filosofie Demokratické levice (bilance k 17. listopadu)” in *Z podvědomí do vědomí, Sborník příspěvků z programové konference Demokratické levice*, Brno, November 1992, 8.

nario, "the future could thus bring insecurity with regard to Czech statehood and ultimately the existence of Czechs as an ethnic group."⁸² Bondy too was worried of a future integration of Czech territory to Germany in 1992.⁸³ Against the alleged dangers that for many of them had roots in their own historical memory and young age, these authors expressed their sympathies for Serbs during the Yugoslav Wars seeing in its breakup a political intrigue of Germany. Krejčí also refused the Russophobia prevailing in Czech political and cultural discourse. On the other hand Patočka, Bělohradský, and Keller were rather indifferent to the issue of the nation and national identity, not to mention "national interests." A somewhat more patriotic stance was taken by Bělohradský in his refusal to lead a dialog with the representatives of the Sudeten Germans in 1996–97—demanded by other mostly post-dissident intellectuals—pointing to their conservative views of the nation based on blood and ethnicity, which he understood as opposing the good tradition of European liberalism.⁸⁴ Similarly Patočka refused in 2002 the "anti-Czech chauvinism" of the "Czech press owned by the German publishing houses," although he took this stance only once as the reaction to the possible coalition of central European national conservatives in 2002 from Hungary (V. Orbán) to Austria (W. Schüssel) and Bavaria (E. Stoiber).⁸⁵ Keller remained silent on this topic. From the whole group, it was only Patočka who frequently formulated a critical point to what he saw as Czech racism towards the Roma/gypsies, while the rest of the authors remained rather silent on this issue as well.

Conclusion

As we have seen, the Czech intellectual Left experienced an important transformation and gradual growth during the last twenty years. The leftist political thought became almost non-existent shortly after 1989. As it was clear the new Czech democracy would take the capitalist path of development, we can observe the decline of publications and organizational

⁸² "If the worst of the existing tendencies will prevail, the politics of the defense of national interests might take again the revivalist form: it will not be a question of keeping the Czech statehood, but of keeping the ethnicity." O. Krejčí, *Český národní zájem a geopolitika* (Prague: Universe-Simba, 1993), 164.

⁸³ Bondy, *Ples upírů*, 20.

⁸⁴ V. Bělohradský, "Ad Just 21," *Literární noviny* 15 (1997): 2.

⁸⁵ J. Patočka, "Národní zájem," *Literární noviny*, 14 (2002): 1–2.

platforms of the Left and that this thinking survived only within a few circles of Czech reform communists or individuals following the traditions of the radical anti-Stalinist Left. Since the turn of the century, a few important intellectuals, who identified themselves with environmental issues or liberalism up to that time, adopted leftist views or positions. A growth of the Czech intellectual Left is well illustrated by the fact that we do not have an example of a left-wing public intellectual from 1993 who moved to the right until 2013. While we can say that the differences among the seven analyzed authors were enormous shortly after the collapse of communism, during the following two decades they became more similar, although there is still a visible difference between the socialist Left, represented by Krejčí, and the liberal Left, represented by Bělohradský or Patočka, with Keller standing somewhat in the middle of the two groups.⁸⁶ The reader might gain an impression that the first group became weaker during this time (Bondy and Sviták died and Krejčí to some extent was isolated). We can however identify more radical attitudes among the youngest generation of intellectuals by comparison to the second group of the liberal Left. Representatives of younger ones such as Švihlíková or Hauser do not seem to accept the liberal consent on socialism as “death forever” or in the best case as “a set of values,” but they seem to look for a new “systemic” alternative towards capitalism.

Since 2005 we can also follow intensifying attempts to transmit a leftist agenda to broader intellectual and cultural circles. Some printed or Internet journals moved to the left, while other new ones were established. The weekly supplement of *Právo*, the so-called Salon, became since 1997 a tribune of the intellectual Left, *Literární noviny* moved to the left after 2004, *A2*, a weekly founded in 2005 was leftist since the very beginning, similar to the Internet daily *Deník referendum*, founded in 2009, or the Internet daily *Britské listy* moving to the left around 2001. Another important contribution to the formation of the identity of the new Left milieu were the translations of Western social critical literature that started to appear in more significant numbers in 2005 (a particularly popular author is Slavoj Žižek). The Czech intellectual Left also started to rediscover their own traditions of non-Stalinist radical leftism (mainly the legacy of Marxist philosophers such as Karel Kosík, Egon Bondy, Robert Kalivoda [1923–1989]

⁸⁶ The closeness of Keller to the first group was mentioned by Bondy in an interview in 2002 where he called his books the popularization of social sciences with a high value, while he called Bělohradský's writing “a bubbling” E. Bondy, “Žijeme v panické situaci, rozhovor s Egonem Bondym,” *Sedmá generace* 8 (2002): 36–40.

and Závěš Kalandra [1902–1950]). On the contrary, both public and private TV stations, for instance, prefer mainstream liberal and conservative political views and corresponding authors possibly somewhat more than in Western Europe, although a serious comparative analysis of the presence of the Right and Left in the media was not yet done.⁸⁷ The still existing cultural differences of the Czech Republic from other Western countries at this point is indicated in a sociological study on Czech journalists from 2006, realizing only 5% of them declared support for the leftist parties, although they gained half the votes in the elections in the same year.⁸⁸

An open question is the potential growth of the Czech intellectual Left in the future and its possible aspiration for some kind of broader cultural influence. Most probably it will remain one of the political discourses, possibly more important than today, but still nothing comparable to the quasi-hegemony of political and economic liberalism in Czechia in the 1990s. It is also an open question as to what extent the leftist intellectuals will be able to transfer their message to broader cultural spheres or how their ideas might find a resonance in films, novels, and music. There are some signals in this direction though not too many, such as the socially critical documentary movies on the U.S. military base conflict *Český mír* [Czech peace] by Vít Klusák and Filip Remunda (2008), or the movie on poverty *Závod ke dnu* [Race to the bottom] by Vít Janeček (2011). The available evidence indicates that the intellectual Left is popular in the circles of young humanities and social sciences students (particularly the current PhD generation), but according to opinion polls, these circles are a minority even in their own generation, while the huge majority of young people share liberal, hedonistic, individualist, and anti-communist views.⁸⁹ In the cohort of 18 to 24 years, the leftist parties obtained only 11% of votes in 2010, while their overall result was 33%.⁹⁰

The Czech intellectual Left is still prevalently male and mostly Prague-centric, although the signals of change are occurring in the youngest

⁸⁷ On the still existing right wing cultural hegemony see the study on dealing with the anti-communist violent resistance group J. Švéda, *Mašínovský mýtus, Ideologie v české literatuře a kultuře* (Příbram: Pistorius a Olšanská, 2012), 199–243.

⁸⁸ B. Petrová, “Volební kampaň v médiích” in *Volby do Poslanecké sněmovny 2006*, ed. D. Čaloud et al. (Brno: Centrum pro studium demokracie a kultury [CDK], 2006), 53.

⁸⁹ P. Sak, K. Saková, *Mládež na křižovatce: sociologická analýza postavení mládeže ve společnosti a její úlohy v procesech evropeizace a informatizace* (Prague: Svoboda Servis, 2004).

⁹⁰ L. Linek, “Úvod: Volební výsledky, účast a vzorce podpory politických stran” in *Voliči a volby 2010*, ed. L. Linek (Prague: Slon, 2012), 25.

generation of intellectuals. It seems that Czech feminism did not produce many important ideas that would influence public discussions as, for example, in Poland. Only two of the analyzed intellectuals are not associated with Prague: Jakub Patočka is from Brno and Jan Keller from Ostrava. However Prague as a city with a much better economic situation than the rest of the country is well known for its strong right-wing, liberal, and conservative preferences. This on the one hand motivates the intellectual Left to express a critique of a lack of empathy in Prague's middle class to the problems of the rest of the country, but on the other hand, the prevailing right-wing liberal mood in the capital prohibits the Left from becoming dominant among the students or circles of artists. It is therefore an open question as to whether the contemporary Czech intellectual Left will remain rather marginal or it will gain more influence in popular culture and in politics.

Feminist Criticism of the “New Democracies” in Serbia and Croatia in the First Half of the 1990s¹

ZSÓFIA LÓRÁND

“No democracy is democracy without women”—varieties of this statement recur in manifestos by feminist activists as well as academic analyses from various disciplines all over the world after WWII. Feminists faced the very same problem in post-1989 Eastern Europe too, including those in the successor states of the freshly dissolved Yugoslavia. Feminism in the successor states in the 1990s, especially in its first half of the decade during the war, has been a popular theme for research; there are many edited volumes and articles in journals, as well as some monographs and a few literary works written about the war both from women’s and feminist perspectives. These works, as well as the sources themselves, are abundant both in English and in Bosnian/Croatian/Serbian. Due to the focus on the war and feminist activism relating to the war, there is much that has been said about the body, rape, feminist activism, gender based violence, gender and nationalism. It seems, however, that despite the vast material, we still need an in-depth analysis of the (dis)continuity with feminist activity in Yugoslavia in the two preceding decades on the one hand, and one focusing on democracy and an analysis of how these feminist discourses in the early 1990s grapple with the concept of democracy, on the other. The two cannot be disentangled, inasmuch as the oppositional feminist circles in the 1970s and 1980s were proposing and working with concepts from the cluster of political concepts of which *democracy*

¹ The original version of this paper was presented at the “Liberal Democracy, Authoritarian Pasts and the Legacy of 1989. Comparative workshop on the recent history of political and social thought in East Central Europe,” in Prague, at the Institute of Contemporary History, Academy of Sciences of the Czech Republic, on 20th-22nd May 2011. I would like to thank Jasmina Lukić and the editors of this volume for their valuable comments, as well as Sonja Drljević, Vera Litričin, and Lina Vušković for extending our talks about the 1970s–1980s to the 1990s and thus providing an important source of inspiration for me.

consists.² This entails that of *gender equality* and ideas as well as practices of civil initiative. Concepts like participation and equal rights certainly belong to the cluster of concepts constituting democracy,³ though it should be noted that before the late 1980s, democracy as a concept was not a central one to the feminist discourse, that is, the “ideational formation”⁴ of new Yugoslav feminism. The scope of this paper needs to be narrowed down to those actors and groups of the 1990s which emerged from the feminist groups in the 1970–1980s in Yugoslavia for practical reasons too: as we shall see, there was a proliferation of women’s groups with both feminist and antifeminist agendas, a phenomenon well exemplified by Mirjana Marković-Milošević calling herself a feminist.⁵

A conceptual-contextual analysis is due here, since in order to see what happens to the use of the concept of *democracy* (or lack thereof) in feminist discourses is very much dependent on the use and therefore, interpretation of the concept, that is attempts to give meanings to and monopolize meanings of the concept in other discourses.⁶ Similar to former, primarily non-democratic political systems in the past, such as state socialism or fascism, the new nationalist regimes in Croatia and Serbia also realized that, in the words of Jan-Werner Müller, their “justifications of rule had to employ a political vocabulary that was at least partly shared with liberal democracy.”⁷ Precisely in order to see the difference between the attempts

² M. Freeden, *Ideologies and Political Theory: A Conceptual Approach* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1996), 48.

³ Ibidem.

⁴ Ibidem.

⁵ M. Marković-Milošević, “Bez sindroma ‘prve dame,’” interview with Aleksandar Tijanić, *Start* 518, October 26, 1988, 27–32. Marković defines herself as communist-feminist, which to her “came into being and developed as a reaction to the position of women throughout human history and does not include, at least not in the mainstream, aggressive relations to men. On the contrary!” (27) However, her “feminism” was clearly not originating from the sources of the feminists discussed in this paper and her use of the term is an example of the many uses and abuses of the term.

⁶ As for *meaning*, a rather problematic term itself, I rely on Mieke Bal and clear my usage of the word: by *meaning* I mean “interpretation” and maybe “semantic content,” based on the contexts. M. Bal, *Travelling Concepts in the Humanities: A Rough Guide* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2002), 27. In the meantime, interpreting contested concepts is a struggle for meanings, cf. Freeden.

⁷ J.W. Müller, “European Intellectual History as Contemporary History,” *Journal of Contemporary History* 46, no. 3 (2011): 574–590. See also idem, *Contesting Democracy: Political Ideas in Twentieth-Century Europe* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2011). This is a book that proved rather inspiring while finishing this text, offering an insightful analysis of debates and discussions on democracy in Europe in the past century.

to give meaning in the feminist and the nationalist discourses, at least a sketch of a comparison is due here whose aim is to shed light on the inherent processes of interpretations of democracy within feminist discourses and their affirmative and critical points as far as democracy as a concept is concerned. In this sense, the comparison is also a contextualization.

Before the analysis of the nationalist discourse and its juxtaposition with the feminist ones, past feminist discourse in Yugoslavia and the general feminist scene during the war period must be reviewed. It should be noted that although I speak of feminism in Yugoslavia in general, it is made up of several feminist discourses, and despite these feminist discourses sharing many elements, when it comes to the conceptual analysis of democracy, what we have are rather various authors with rather distinct approaches, backgrounds, and motives. These authors may be individuals or groups, primarily feminist organizations, speaking from either the position of its members or from the position of women in general. The texts analysed here were selected according to their relevance for the conceptual analysis of *democracy*, and therefore some important authors are almost absent, who, based on their significance in the 1990s, deserve more attention. This includes Biljana Kašić, Svetlana Slapšak, and Jasmina Tesanović. Similarly, while I focus on two countries, due to the shared roots of feminism in both countries and the conceptual and thematic focus, I will not provide a separate analysis of feminism in Croatia and Serbia. In this sense my analysis is not strictly comparative and rather integrative, treating feminism in these countries as a dialogue and a continuation of the common past.

The New Yugoslav Feminism in the 1970–1980s

Not long after the second wave of feminism in its increasingly divergent forms came to the fore in the West. Yugoslavia also had an organized form of feminism emerging and gradually growing. As a result it remained an exception in Eastern Europe until the late 1980s. From the time of its appearance in the mid-1970s, the primary field of presence and activity of Yugoslav new feminism was the arts, humanities, and social sciences. The initiators were young academic women finding an institutional background for their new departures. While it drew on Western feminism, Yugoslav feminism was peculiar in the sense that it managed to creatively combine elements of the Western second wave with current issues in

Yugoslav society and other intellectual streams (Frankfurt School, Budapest School of Lukács's philosophy, local Marxist revisionism [Praxis], [Lacanian] psycho-analysis, Central European "Anti-Politics," to mention the most important ones), and since it was able to successfully intertwine theory with literature, arts, and the humanities, and most importantly, to combine theory and activism simultaneously, it was also a very diversified phenomenon. The three major centers were in Belgrade, Zagreb, and, from the early 1980s, Ljubljana. Institutionally, there were research groups called Woman and Society (*Žena i društvo*) in the Sociological Institutes in Ljubljana and Zagreb and the Students' Cultural Center in Belgrade, the members of these groups working together with feminist curators and activists from all the students' cultural centers in the three cities. The members of the groups were in touch on a personal level and, due to certain projects, there was communication between the cities; however, the first occasion for an all-Yugoslav feminist conference was not until 1987. Before that date, there were various journal issues, meetings, public discussions, and conferences where the participants met despite these occasions not being marked specifically as Yugoslav. There were international events preceding the Yugoslav conference, such as the *Comrade-ess Woman: the Woman's Question and Socialist Self-management* (*Drug-ca žena: Žensko pitanje i socijalističke samoupravljanje*) in 1978 in Belgrade and the summer schools at the Inter-University Center Dubrovnik. Informality was not alien to the alternative groups in Yugoslavia. However, the relatively late date of the first all-Yugoslav meeting meant that the feminists did not have to face the problem of various interpretations of their "Yugoslav" identity. The shared identity's basic idea was that of a "transnational sisterhood," using the term "Yugoslav" to indicate it as existing across the federation. It confirmed this by being "transnational," and therefore not taking into consideration the competing meanings of the term "Yugoslav". This conscious avoidance of definitions allowed the feminist actors to ignore the other aspects of the nationality question. Especially for the Belgrade and Zagreb members of the groups, "sisterhood" was an equally positive and strategically important term. The initiative was producing relevant and innovative ideas and started crucial civil action against gender-based, mostly partnership domestic violence by the time the war broke out.

Nineties Groups

The break-up of Yugoslavia and the outburst of the war, which brought about a new legal framework for civil association, together led to a multiplication of feminist organizations in the new states. As for the overall picture of activism in Serbia and Croatia (most probably in the entire former Yugoslavia), Marina Blagojević observes that generally, *most activism* in the 1990s was "largely extra-institutional, reactive, and protective,"⁸ and that the anti-war regime-critical groups were almost exclusively urban and middle-class.⁹ This categorization is present in the case of the grassroots women's groups too; they were self-described "anti-nationalist" as opposed to patriotic feminist organizations.

In both Croatia and Serbia, the stem of the anti-nationalist groups was the *Žena i društvo* group active from the late 1970s on. Most of its founding members, whom I would not call "leaders" but rather the more active and productive women in the group, joined anti-nationalist organizations. While in Croatia there are quite a few nationalistic groups (*Kareta*, *Trešnjevka*, *Bedem Ljubavi*), in Serbia these were lacking at the organizational level: women with nationalist attitudes seem to have joined the mainstream political parties, like the women's section of the former Yugoslav SKS or Mirjana Marković-Milošević's allegedly socialist party. On the anti-nationalist feminist side, there emerged 14 different women's groups between 1991 and 1997.¹⁰ These were rather similar to each other, stemming from the *Žena i društvo* circles and had overlaps in the membership, whereas in Croatia there was a wider and more diverse ideological scale. At the patriotic end of the scale in Croatia, the organizations were openly anti-Serbian to such an extent that they refused any cooperation with Serbian feminist organizations. When it came to the question of rape, the ethnic aspect overruled the gender aspect.¹¹ For the anti-nationalist femi-

⁸ M. Blagojević, "Belgrade Women's Protests 1996/1997: From Women in the Movement to Women's Movement?" in *Women and Citizenship in Central and Eastern Europe*, ed. J. Lukić, J. Regulski and D. Zaviršek (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2006): 147–164.

⁹ Blagojević, "Belgrade Women's Protests 1996/1997," 153.

¹⁰ Ibidem, 163, note 17. Cf. M. Blagojević, ed., *Ka vidljivoj ženskoj istoriji: Ženski pokret u Beogradu 90-ih* (Belgrade: Centar za ženske studije, 1998).

¹¹ On this matter, cf. V. Kesić, "Muslim Women, Croatian Women, Serbian Women, Albanian Women" in *Balkan as Metaphor: Between Globalization and Fragmentation*, ed. D. I. Bjelić and O. Savić (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2002). V. Nikolić-Ristanović, ed., *Women, Violence and War: Wartime Victimization of Refugees in the Balkans* (Budapest–New York: CEU Press, 2000); V. Kesić, V. Janković, B. Bijelić, eds., *Women Recollecting*

nists this was unacceptable. These groups, described elsewhere as patriotic,¹² were in my view nationalistic. Their attitude, the refusal to sit at the negotiating table with the other feminists not only from the Serbia but anti-nationalists from Croatia, and the hate speech they employed against Serbs, went beyond patriotism and indicated that the ethnic aspect outweighed the idea of female solidarity. The mothers' movement—something the feminists from the *Žena i društvo* groups at first enthusiastically welcomed as a grassroots feminist civil association project—also absorbed these nationalist characteristics.¹³

It is telling of the small though effective creators of a post-Yugoslav feminist discourse from Belgrade and Zagreb were even more isolated than other opposition groups of the 1990s. In Daša Duhaček's words, "Feminists for the most part overlap with peace activists, sadly, and more importantly, the reverse does not apply."¹⁴ Marina Blagojević makes the same argument,¹⁵ supported by the analysis of Bojana Šušak, who was mostly concerned with the many overlaps in the way "a certain number of people [keep] reappear[ing] as the initiators of new organizations."¹⁶ To bring back some traces of optimism and a more positive evaluation of the events of the 1990s, Šušak quotes Nebojša Popov: "This 'other Serbia' admittedly exerted only 'a limited influence on the events, but its existence nevertheless gives us hope in the knowledge that there is at least someone who resolutely delineates the limits of violence, not according to maps, but according to contemporary criteria of humanity and civilized existence.'"¹⁷

Memories: The Center for Women War Victims Ten Years Later (Zagreb: Center for Women War Victims, 2003). My analysis of the debate between a victimizing and ethnicizing vs. empowering discourse on wartime mass rapes in the case of the war between the former member states of Yugoslavia: Zsófia Lóránd, "Szexuális erőszak diskurzusok a kilencvenes évek (poszt)jugoszláv háborúiban/háborúiról," *Századvég* 3 (2009): 79–98.

¹² D. Žarkov, *The Body of War: Media, Ethnicity, and Gender in the Break-Up of Yugoslavia* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2007); J. Batinić, "Feminism, Nationalism and War: The Yugoslav Case," *Journal of International Women's Studies* 3, 1 (November 2001), <http://www.bridgew.edu/soas/jiws/fall01/batinic.pdf>, accessed April 12, 2012.

¹³ Cf. W. Bracewell, "Women, motherhood, and contemporary Serbian nationalism," *Women's Studies International Forum* 19, 1–2 (1996): 25–33; A. Žarkov, A. Mišk-ovska-Kajevska, *Communists, Feminists and Nationalists. A Journey into the Former Yugoslavia (1941–1991)* (MA thesis, Amsterdam: University of Amsterdam, 2008).

¹⁴ D. Duhaček, "Feminist Perspectives on Democratization in Serbia / Western Balkans," *Signs* 31, 4 (Summer 2006), 923–928, 925.

¹⁵ Blagojević, "Belgrade Women's Protests 1996/1997".

¹⁶ B. Šušak, "An Alternative to War" in *The Road to War in Serbia*, 50.

¹⁷ *Ibidem*, 479.

When taking a closer look, the only crucial difference between the Croatian and the Serbian scene is in the relative influence of certain characters. In the Croatian case, there were a few feminist authors already well-known abroad, mostly because by the war they were already publishing in the West, and had emigrated from the country and turned their emigration into a form of personal and political resistance. This act on behalf of Slavenka Drakulić, Dubravka Ugrešić, and Rada Iveković implicitly separates them from local feminist organizations, of which Drakulić and Iveković had been founding members.¹⁸ Their emigration made direct cooperation with the feminist groups less feasible and at the same time, due to their position as well-known intellectuals already before the war, both at home and abroad, made their voices more audible. It is important to note that the tension between speaking for a group and speaking as an individual is constantly there in most feminist utterances: women's subjectivity, individuality, and agency vis-à-vis women's joint action to achieve this and the idea of (global) sisterhood in many ways are also a means to achieve the former. The dangers of a group or communal voice or a group's speaking position is that there is no real group or community behind the individual voice, which therefore "appropriate[s] the power" of this plurality.¹⁹ In this type of narrative, it is again the individual voice and the individuality of women that disappear from the narrative. Ideally, the authors try to overcome this tension by consciously using the narrating "I" and making references to other women with names and making clear which groups they adhere to. On the other hand, there are authors who abide by the common use of the term "sisterhood," without reflecting on the importance of differences. Whereas I have found more examples of the former cases, there certainly are examples for the latter as well, some of which will be presented in this paper.²⁰

¹⁸ Cf. Zs. Lóránd, "Individual Approaches to Feminism in Yugoslav Literature" in *Yearbook 9* ed. J.B. Joly and A. Lotz (Stuttgart: Akademie Schloss Solitude, 2008).

¹⁹ S. Sniader Lanser, *Fictions of Authority: Women Writers and Narrative Voice* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1992), 22.

²⁰ A similar question is posed regarding the collective nature of the identity of the Women in Black by Bojan Bilić, a few months after my paper was first presented. However, his different methodology and choice of material of analysis leads to a rather different, though convincing conclusion, stating that the members of the Women in Black group developed a collective identity. Cf. B. Bilić, „Not in *Our Name*: Collective Identity of the Serbian *Women in Black*,” *Nationalities Papers* 40, 4 (2012): 607–623.

Democracy Discourse

As hinted in the introductory paragraphs, *democracy* did not appear as a central concept in the feminist discourse before the late 1980s. The most plausible explanations, to my mind, derive from their argumentation strategies at the time: the feminists did not directly criticize the entire state-socialist Yugoslav system, but were rather precise in attacking aspects of its patriarchy. When it came to speaking directly about the system, it was made clear that it happens from women's perspectives and that the feminists demand the promised and unfulfilled equality between men and women. The concept of *democracy* does not come up in the feminist discourse until the time it gets into the center of broader political discussions, when it became clear from these that there are competing meanings and struggles between them. What should also be taken into consideration is the feminist criticism of democracy that was brought into the foreground by Western political discourse claiming, to borrow the words of Carol Pateman, "For feminists, [democracy] never existed; women have never been and still are not admitted as full and equal members and citizens in any country known as a 'democracy.'"²¹ That is, if we think of equality as an integral part of democracy, it is necessary that women become equal members and citizens, otherwise democracy remains incomplete. Pateman places her criticism on the tradition of contract theory and draws her conclusions from this tradition, which was revisited by others like Nancy Fraser in her *Justice Interruptus*.²² Even though, as Nanette Funk argues,²³ contract theory has not been as influential in East European liberal thinking as it was in its Anglo-Saxon variant, and to a large extent, within the continental Western tradition, Pateman appears to be the first coherent attempt to reassess the tradition of Western (liberal) democracies from a feminist perspective. Apparently, the feminists in Yugoslavia started to read articles by Pateman in the late 1970s,²⁴ even before her book, *The Sexual Contract*, was published in 1988 in English. However, there were several important authors from the United States and Western

²¹ C. Pateman, *The Disorder of Women. Democracy, Feminism and Critical Theory* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1989), 210.

²² N. Fraser, *Justice Interruptus: Critical Reflections on the "Postsocialist" Condition* (New York: Routledge, 1997), 225–235.

²³ N. Funk, "Feminist Critiques of Liberalism: Can They Travel East? Their Relevance in Eastern and Central Europe and the Former Soviet Union," *Signs* 29, 3 (Spring 2004), 700–701.

²⁴ Cf. V. Katurnarić, "Marksizam i feministička inteligencija," *Argumenti* 4 (1979), 205.

Europe on their reading lists, and therefore it seems justified to assume that they knew the text that became a frequent reference in their writings in the 1990s.²⁵

Democracy criticism arrived in the post-Yugoslav period, or rather the 1990s, when the concept of *democracy* itself shifted into focus. Writing about the new regimes after 1990 in the whole of post-socialist Eastern Europe, Susan Gal and Gail Kligman observe, what was later discussed in various academic and activist publications in the entire region, that "the creation of democratic institutions does not suffice to resolve the problem of patriarchal legacies."²⁶ In the perception of the Belgrade-based feminist Žarana Papić, the "post-communist democracies were male dominated, overtly patriarchal, traditional and conservative regarding the position of women, their social role and significance."²⁷ These systems are those that Indira Kajošević from Podgorica calls "democracy with a male face."²⁸

By comparison with other Eastern, especially East Central, European countries in the early 1990s, as well as the older Western democracies, the situation in Croatia and Serbia—and the other successor states of the former Yugoslavia, maybe with the exception of Slovenia—is more complex, considering the serious democratic deficit in both countries and the strong, propagandist discourse on behalf of both states about their own true democratic nature. The lack of democratic institutions and practices was a target of criticism both in international politics (here Serbia was often more condemned than Croatia) and in academic publications and analysis.²⁹ Here, the position of feminism is not simply critical towards

²⁵ Cf. D. Duhaček, "Travel On, Europe" in *What Can We Do for Ourselves: East European Feminist Conference*, ed. M. Blagojević, D. Duhaček and J. Lukić (Belgrade: Center for Women's Studies, Research and Communication, 1994): 75–86; A. Milić, "Women's Rights and Civil Rights" in Center for Women's Studies, Research and Communication, *Women's Rights and Social Transition in FR Yugoslavia* (Belgrade: Center for Women's Studies, Research and Communication, 1997): 9–18.

²⁶ S. Gal, G. Kligman, *The Politics of Gender After Socialism: A Comparative-Historical Essay* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000); Blagojević, "Belgrade's Protests 1996/1997," 158.

²⁷ Ž. Papić, "From State-Socialism to State-Nationalism: The Case of Serbia in Gender Perspective" in *What Can We Do for Ourselves*, 59.

²⁸ I. Kajošević, "Women of Yugoslavia in Parliament and Political Life After the Multi-party Elections in 1989" in *What Can We Do for Ourselves*, 64.

²⁹ Cf. J. Seroka and V. Pavlović, eds, *The Tragedy of Yugoslavia: The Failure of Democratic Transformation* (Armonk: M.E. Sharpe, 1992); S. P. Ramet, ed., *Balkan Babel: The Disintegration of Yugoslavia from the Death of Tito to the Fall of Milošević* (Boulder: Westview Press, 2002); idem, *Whose Democracy? Nationalism, Religion, and the*

Western-type liberal democracy, since they face the severe consequences of the lack of this, however much flawed political system, every day. Therefore, it needs to enter into an alliance with the proponents of the form of liberal democracy, which is, simultaneously, the target of its criticism.³⁰

At the same time, the nationalist discourses in both countries try to gain legitimacy from the use of the concept of *democracy* and the attribution of meanings to it. As we shall see, in continuation of their discourse in the 1980s, they interpret *democracy* as the freedom to express their nationalism. While after the Second World War, the proponents of state socialism attempted to control the meanings of democracy, as they “promised fully to realize values commonly associated with democracy: equality, especially a form of equality more substantive than formal equality before the law,”³¹ a pretext generously ignored by most of the newly emerging discourses, as part of the strategy to put forth their interpretations of the concept.³² Part of these discursive strategies of the new post-communist regimes to delineate who is a friend and who is an enemy was to define themselves as the sole carriers of democracy. This enabled them to accuse those in disagreement with the nationalist course of being against the new democratic transformation, celebrated all over the East European countries at the time. This was accompanied, particularly in Croatia, with the labelling of those who argued against the break-up of Yugoslavia and creation of the nation states in any way as “communists,” therefore anti-democrats.

The processes and events in 1989–1990 are analyzed by Dubravka Stojanović for the Serbian case, and her analysis clearly points out the elements mentioned above: “Under the pressure from the opposition, the events in Eastern Europe, and the establishment of the multiparty system in the other Yugoslav republics, the government in Serbia was compelled to pass the necessary laws legalizing parties and announcing the first

Doctrine of Collective Rights in post-1989 Eastern Europe (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 1997).

³⁰ Funk comes to a similar conclusion in her analysis of feminism and liberalism in post-1989 Eastern Europe, pointing out that feminist authors in the region resort to liberalism to defend or support their agenda, for example, to defend social rights, challenge neoliberalism, and defend a more just postsocialism.” Funk, “Feminist Critiques of Liberalism,” 717.

³¹ Müller, “European Intellectual History as Contemporary History,” 589.

³² For the discussions on democracy in Yugoslavia, c.f. e.g. E. Kardelj, *Socijalistička demokratija u jugoslovenskoj praksi* (Beograd: Kultura, 1957).

multi-party elections in December 1990."³³ Stojanović does not elaborate on what is meant by "opposition" here, but as it turns out from her text, it was the the League of Communists of Serbia (*Savez komunista*) that presented itself as the opponent of the previous Serbian leadership.³⁴ The establishment of democracy happened only on the surface though. "The government did not facilitate institutional assumptions of political pluralism, as can be seen in the serious deficiencies in the law on political parties, elections and public voting," so "the established political system basically did not suit the system of parliamentary democracy."³⁵ Still, at the level of the discourse, there were various efforts made to divert the attention from the institutional lack of democracy and prove its existence by an appropriation of the concept itself. It is exactly the discursive-conceptual struggle that makes it necessary for all parties to focus much of their discussions on *democracy*. Whereas a broader analysis of the nationalist tackling with *democracy* would fall out of the scope of this paper, there needs to be a few paragraphs summarizing the key elements of how nationalist texts place *democracy* into their own context and align it with concepts of sovereignty, national pride, and territorial integrity. As we shall see, unlike the fascism and state socialism analysed by Müller, the nationalist discourses in Croatia and Serbia not only attempted "to create new conceptual meanings by recontextualizing ostensibly democratic values,"³⁶ they create new conceptual meanings of democracy itself.

In the Croatian case, Franjo Tuđman himself was one of the main proponents of a new democratic Croatia, applying a highly sacralizing language equating democracy with national sovereignty: "With the reconciliation of the Croats living here and those who emigrated we have fulfilled our national-democratic rebirth, in which a high level of self-confidence at all layers and ages of Croatian society is reflected, and their willingness to bring sacrifices so that Croatia can finally realize its statehood."³⁷ The existence of the independent Croatian state was a prerequisite for Tuđman's understanding of a democratic state, and he argued to convince his audience that the international recognition of Croatia's independence was the recognition of the democratic functioning of the country

³³ D. Stojanović, "The Traumatic Circle of the Serbian Opposition" in *The Road to War in Serbia. Trauma and Catharsis*, ed. N. Popov and D. Gojković (Budapest–New York: CEU Press, 2000), 451.

³⁴ Stojanović, "The Traumatic Circle of the Serbian Opposition," 450.

³⁵ Ibidem, 451–452.

³⁶ Müller, "European Intellectual History as Contemporary History," 589.

³⁷ F. Tuđman, *Povijesna sudba naroda* (Zagreb: Školska knjiga, 1996), 463.

as well: "Taking all these [international relations] into consideration, we can rightfully conclude that the democratic and sovereign Croatia, relying on its strong democratic political system and economic transition, managed to achieve the acknowledgement of the country and ensure its reliability as a member of the world community."³⁸ Similarly, in Serbia, democracy as a concept was both used to legitimize the rule of Milošević and interpreted as a framework that allowed a space for nationalism.

As for the Serbian case, Drinka Gojković gives a good analysis of the democracy discourse employed by Dobrica Ćosić, where Ćosić refers to the democracy of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (SFRJ) as a source of legitimization for his anti-Albanian statements: "Yugoslavia declared itself socialist and democratic, yet in one of its republics it allowed the minority population to terrorize the majority ethnic group and to use persecution to take over their territory." In Gojković's analysis, "The survival of Yugoslavia, according to Ćosić, hinged on the capacity of those responsible to put a democratic union in place of the active anti-Serbian coalition. Ćosić thus saw the untangling of the Kosovo knot as a test of Yugoslav democracy."³⁹ Both examples, even in such a condensed analysis, point out very well how democracy is employed here as a legitimizing tool for nationalist ideology. At the same time, it also allowed the authoritarian regimes to label their opposition as anti-state, anti-democratic, and often as "Yugo-nostalgic" or communist. This argument appears very often in the (anti-nationalist) anti-feminist statements identifying the regime-critical feminist groups with the aforementioned labels. This became easier due to the relatively unproblematic existence of the feminist groups from the 1970s onwards, especially if one disregarded that the new Yugoslav feminist groups at that time were highly critical of the state.⁴⁰

³⁸ Ibidem, 479.

³⁹ This and the previous quote: D. Ćosić, "Koliko smo sami krivi," *Književne novine*, 1987, quoted in D. Gojković, "The Birth of Nationalism from the Spirit of Democracy" in *The Road to War in Serbia*, 333. "Ćosić's democratic resolve, however, remained rhetorical. Although on other occasions he insisted that 'the Serbian Question is only a question of democracy' (Srpsko pitanje – demokratsko pitanje, 1987) b), his obsession with the Serbian national plight drastically reduced the room for democratic action, suggesting that the path to democracy lay in resolving the Serbian problem, not that the Serbian problem could be resolved only by using democratic means." 334, note: "The intellectual elite in Slovenia and Croatia also cited national vulnerability as the main objection to 'Communism', and an objection to Communism, regardless of what it contained, was considered a priori to be a sign of democratic leanings," p. 349

⁴⁰ The most striking case of the anti-feminist campaign in Croatia is the infamous "witch-trial," where five intellectual women, Slavenka Drakulić, Rada Iveković, Vesna Kesić,

Feminist Approaches to Democracy

The feminist discourse on democracy in Serbia and Croatia in the 1990s, based on the research cited below, works along three major lines of conceptual interpretation: 1) feminists saw civil society and active citizenship, mostly in the sense of "ethical civil society," as the carrier of democracy, 2) they placed emphasis on democracy as being incomplete unless women were included and patriarchal values overwritten, 3) nonetheless, they treated democracy as a counter-concept to nationalism and xenophobia on the one hand, and state socialism on the other. Democracy, in the sense attributed by feminists, excludes all these. In what follows I will explore these positions, with special attention to the individual and group positions of specific claims. The feminist groups and individuals dealt with here were in a situation similar to Central European dissidents, inasmuch as that they were facing a pressing need for self-identification and self-positioning and were placed at the crossroads between what the authors Juan J. Linz and Alfred Stepan define as "ethical civil society" and "political society," the significance of which, in the case of Central European dissent, is analyzed in detail by Alan Renwick.⁴¹

The most important difference between the two positions is that while ethical civil society is based on the "ethics of truth," political society is "interest-based;"⁴² the first being possibly anti-political, whereas the latter involving compromise and the entering of the political arena or, in the case of Central European dissidents, the state. Further options are to ignore the state (anti-politics, secession) and to engage with the state from

Jelena Lovrić, and Dubravka Ugrešić were accused in an article (*Globus*, December 11, 1992) of "raping" their own country, as they were critical of the nationalism and war participation of the Tudman-regime. For a more detailed description, cf. M. Tax, "The Five Croatian 'Witches': A Casebook on 'Trial by Public Opinion' as a Form of Censorship and Intimidation. July 1, 1993." <http://www.wworld.org/archive/archive.asp?ID=157>, accessed February 11, 2005. Another case of a woman artist being labelled a traitor and a witch was that of Jagoda Buić, cf. B. Dežulović, "From Lies to Lynch: Witch from Kolorina," *Feral Tribune*, September 16, 1996, <http://www.ex-yupress.com/feral/feral35.html>, accessed October 4, 2012.

⁴¹ Cf. Alan Renwick's analysis based on J. J. Linz and A. Stepan, *Problems of Democratic Transition and Consolidation: Southern Europe, South America, and Post-Communist Europe* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996). A. Renwick, "Anti-Political or Just Anti-Communist? Varieties of Dissidence in East-Central Europe and their Implications for the Development of Political Society," *East European Politics and Societies* 20, 2 (2006), 286-318.

⁴² *Ibidem*, 303.

the outside, which here serve as analytical categories too.⁴³ Applying this framework, the dilemma of the Yugoslav feminist case derives from the rather grassroots nature of their first two decades, where despite the highly intellectual nature of their activity, the organization of the groups was following the patterns of grassroots, underground, and dissident groups, something the participants valued as an example for their own work.

The foundation of the feminist groups, informally in the 1970s and 1980s and formally (legally) in the late 1980s and early 1990s, brought along various groups for women and children and was therefore in itself an expression of the feminist concept of civil society with many discursive manifestations. As Vesna Teršelić from the Anti-War Campaign Croatia (*Antiratna kampanja Hrvatske*) writes about women's peace initiatives, "By promoting the values of nonviolence and the protection of human rights, we were building and expanding our civil space."⁴⁴ Political civil space created by aiming at certain goals is a constitutive element of the feminist-interpreted version of democracy. However, the conceptual situation is not easy, there being struggles for the very meaning of the term *citizen* too. As Žarana Papić from Belgrade argues: "we did not, and do not, have a civic definition of the citizen, but only a narrow ideologically and instrumentally defined one."⁴⁵ In this manner, we can interpret the open letters and appeals written by the various organizations as speech acts aiming to create new meanings of citizenship, while they also bring forth arguments about how the lack of active citizenship hinders the fulfilment of a real democracy. This happens in detail in the open letter from the Belgrade Women's Lobby (*Beogradski ženski lobi*), with the argument that the demand for obedience [*pokornost*] could not be a core concept⁴⁶ of democracy.⁴⁷ In this very early letter from 1990, they state that most models of democracy treated citizens as underage persons. Patriarchy

⁴³ Ibidem, 288.

⁴⁴ V. Teršelić, "Širanje našeg civilnog prostora: žene u mirovnim inicijativama" / "Expanding Our Civil Space: Women in Peace Initiatives" in *Žene i politika mira. Prilozi ženskoj kulturi otpora / Women and the Politics of Peace. Contributions to a Culture of Women's Resistance*, ed., R. Borić, Ž. Jelavić, B. Kašić (Zagreb: Centar za ženske studije 1997), 21.

⁴⁵ Ž. Papić, "From State-Socialism to State-Nationalism," 55.

⁴⁶ M. Freeden, *Ideologies and Political Theory: A Conceptual Approach* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996), 54; Idem, "Concepts, Ideology and Political Theory" in *Herausforderungen der Begriffsgeschichte*, ed. C. Dutt (Heidelberg: Winter, 2003): 57-58.

⁴⁷ "Uopšte nam ne odgovara. Otvoreno pismo javnosti," *Žene za žene. Vanredni bilten SOS-a 5* (November 1993), 72.

defined the pattern of thinking, although, they maintained, it was an out-dated construct that "by the beginning of the 3rd millennium was going to fall apart."⁴⁸ This very optimistic vision, even though proven wrong in the following two decades when it did not fall apart, helped to bend the argument towards the criticism of this archaic, mythic vision of society and gender in that society: "Democracy has no connection with the obedience to the Father of the Family and the Father of the Nation, neither with the suffering figure of Mother of Yugoslavs (Majka Jugovića)."⁴⁹ This argument also envisions women becoming "subjects of their own life and politics."⁵⁰ Ideas of modernity and progress became connected to democracy, and the vision of progress in a society entailed women's emancipation and the lack of oppressive structures, like patriarchy. It is not by accident that the criticism of a totalitarian vision of society, based on obedience instead of civil action and representation, led to a criticism of gender inequality and patriarchy: the key to a just society for the feminist groups was the inclusion of women and the abolition of patriarchy.

This was the element missing from the party programs in Serbia, in an ironically benevolent interpretation: "as if parties were keeping it for another, newer, better time."⁵¹ The author of these lines, an activist from Serbian feminist groups, Nadežda Četković, emphasized that in her understanding "gender contradictions" are more important than "those of class, nationality or religion, not even mentioning race."⁵² This inclusion of women, both at the level of language, for example in legislation and politics, and in the very content of this legislation is not by accident omnipresent in the texts.⁵³ The most explicit formulation of the criticism is the

⁴⁸ "Uopšte..., " 72.

⁴⁹ Ibidem.

⁵⁰ Ibidem.

⁵¹ N. Četković, "Pitanje strankama: da li će žene glasati za vas? 'Uvodno izlaganje'", , " *Žene za žene. Vanredni bilten SOS-a 5* (November 1993), 24.

⁵² Četković, "Pitanje strankama," 24.

⁵³ To quote a few of these: "All themes in life are about both men and women," see Beogradski ženski lobi, "Minimalni program ženskih zahteva", 29th September 1990. *Žene za žene. Vanredni bilten SOS-a 5* (November 1993), 13; this organization also emphasized that the laws and especially, the constitution entailing basic rights, use both the feminine and the masculine form of nouns, especially those as citizen, candidate, president and other politically related terms, cf. Beogradski ženski lobi, "Amandmani za predlog ustava Srbije," *Žene za žene. Vanredni bilten SOS-a 5* (November 1993), 14; quite a few demands for amendments were focused on women's reproductive rights and how the language of the text makes attempts to limit women's autonomy over their bodies: the word "man" [čovjek] should be replaced by the word "woman" in the sentence:

statement: “there is no democracy without women.”⁵⁴ “Obedience” in the family and in society, that is, the value system of patriarchy with a need for passive objects instead of active subjects and the requisite support of hierarchies, in Četković’s argument, paves the way for authoritarianism. Četković speaks in the context of Serbia of the 1990s, however, the statement carries a general judgement, and the difference between the authoritarian Serbia and the other countries—approximately all the other countries in the world—ruled by patriarchy, is not explained. Neither is the role of politics and active participation in politics differentiated upon, therefore the author overlooks the fact that for women who are “subjects of their own life and politics,”⁵⁵ acting upon this subjectivity may also support the authoritarian nationalist regimes. However, in understanding Četković’s position, one must consider the underlying assumption of her text: if women are aware of the functioning of patriarchy, they do not support it. The idea of raising awareness, which guided the early Second Wave in the US and was discussed in feminist writings in socialist Yugoslavia, recurs here.

The issues of women’s inclusion into politics and the possibilities for civil action are present in many of these statements from organizations, and therefore, these are frequently voiced in group statements. Two outstanding cases deserve more attention, one being the Center for Women War Victims (*Centar za žene žrtve rata*, CZŽŽR) from Croatia and the *Ženska stranka* (Women, Ethics, Solidarity, Tolerance [*Žene, Etika, Solidarnost, Tolerancija*], ŽEST —see below for further description) from Serbia. The relation of these organizations to politics, that is, the way they interpret what politics and participation in the political institutions and policy processes mean, crossing the line between ethical civil society and political society, is remarkable.

In an open letter, in response to the remarks of an MP, the CZŽŽR described its activity and mission, emphasizing that: “we are not involved in politics and we do not tackle the causes of war, nor do we make political assessments of it in what we do. We only deal with its consequences.”

“It is the right of the woman to decide about giving birth to children” (Ibidem.); the amendment-suggestions are almost always employing a difference-based approach, emphasizing women’s different life conditions, physical differences and social position and emphasizing how these seemingly “androgenic” laws limit and restrain women’s freedom and equality.

⁵⁴ Ženski Parlament, “To the Serbian Parliament,” *Žene za žene. Vanredni bilten SOS-a 5* (November 1993), 90-91.

⁵⁵ “Uopšte...,” 72.

They gave an account of their financial sources, which come mostly from foreign institutions, especially non-governmental organizations, and then they added that they were still registered in Croatia, and that they did their "best to do everything within the framework of the law."⁵⁶ This was already a distancing gesture from the state's war policy, reminding the readers and the direct addressee of the letter that their existence was in accord with the allegedly *democratic* legal framework of the new state, although they were not obliged to agree with its ideology. However, coming from the mission to help women war victims and refugees and to protect women's interests, which is both a "professional obligation" and a "political one," the CZZŽR confirmed that "there is nothing strange about us reacting—both inside the country and abroad—if we notice that Croatian politics, the Government, or some of its offices or individuals jeopardize these interests or violate women's and refugees' rights. We deeply believe that this is both our democratic right and democratic obligation, and that, by doing so, we promote the democratic and political life in Croatia rather than harm it."⁵⁷

The emphasis had been placed again on the democratic nature of their activity and the new state, but they questioned the thought that anything not serving the purposes of the ruling party Croatian Democratic Union (*Hrvatska demokratska zajednica*, HDZ) and the government's politics would go against the democratic value system. Their pro-women and anti-war attitude overwrote their patriotism and presupposed wartime nationalism, allowing no other position stating, "Please believe us that, after everything, we find no particular satisfaction in the banal fact that since the beginning we have considered even the worst compromise ('with the devil himself,' as you put it in your interview) better than war."⁵⁸ According to the CZZŽR's standpoint, democracy was primarily about the protection of human rights and the sanctity of human life, whereas the HDZ representatives and the government found any criticism of the state directed towards the international (and domestic) audience as jeopardizing the existing order, which in their view was a democratic one. The search and, more importantly, the success in finding international forums to voice criticism

⁵⁶ Centar za žene žrtve rata, "Letter to Vera Stanić" in *Women Recollecting Memories: The Center for Women War Victims Ten Years Later / Žene obnavljaju sjećanja: Centar za žene žrtve rata deset godina poslije*, ed. V. Kesić (Zagreb: Center for Women War Victims, 2003), 190.

⁵⁷ Ibidem.

⁵⁸ Ibidem.

and concern on behalf of the feminists, was a constant point of clash between the anti-nationalist and anti-war feminists and the nationalist governments in Serbia and Croatia. In this way, the CZŽŽR entered the political field, itself being part of ethical civil society that demanded to be viewed as a carrier of democratic values and a representative of democracy. By voicing their views, the CZŽŽR created a piece of democratic civil society, forging active citizenship. What they expressed in their texts was examples of the first and third aspects of this paper's analysis, namely that which promotes ethical civil society and that which contrasts democracy with nationalism.

The other organization to be examined here is the ŽEST. The ŽEST came into being in 1990, founded by the members of the *Žena i društvo* group in Belgrade, among whom were (to mention a few names which appear at other places of this analysis too): Marina Blagojević, Anđelka Milić, Žarana Papić, and Lina Vušković. Despite the Belgrade location, the ŽEST saw itself as an all-Yugoslav initiative. The ŽEST is an acronym for *Žene, Etika, Solidarnost, Tolerancija* (Women, Ethics, Solidarity, Tolerance) as well as for *Ženska stranka* (Women's party), and as we shall see, its aim was to promote women's political participation. The ŽEST did not use the word "feminist" in its descriptions out of awareness of anti-feminist resentment and of the fear of losing women who did not have the chance to learn about the meaning of feminism from other anti-feminist sources.⁵⁹ The predominance of the latter in the Serbian and the entire post-Yugoslav context at the time shows the sad fact that the new feminist movement would have needed more time to reach a wider population with its agenda. Despite the decision to omit the word *feminism*, the ŽEST still represented the values and principles present in the discourse of feminist authors and organizations. It incorporated into its program the statement about women's inclusion in politics, which was elaborated upon in various ways by many authors, as discussed above. Whereas the ŽEST's texts avoid the use of the words "feminism" and "feminist," they are less reluctant to resort to and rely on other core concepts of the feminist discourse, such as "patriarchy" and its criticism: "The Women's Party is willing and will advocate the dis-privileging of men, for in *patriarchal*

⁵⁹ This is why the title of Cynthia Cockburn's article about the ŽEST is confusing in two ways: the ŽEST was not explicitly feminist and refused to be restrained to Serbia, both culturally and politically, whereas they could not run for election in the states which left the SRFJ. See C. Cockburn, "A Women's Political Party for Yugoslavia: Introduction to the Serbian Feminist Manifesto," *Feminist Review* 39 (Winter 1991): 155-160.

authority and power, it sees a permanent challenge and *obstacle to the democratization of society and the equality of sexes*, but bereft of both intention and need to use its political power and influence to accomplish the domination and privilege of women."⁶⁰ It was on the agenda of the ŽEST to contribute to the development of democracy, having stated that, "It will act so as to facilitate the unveiling and the recognition of the forms and holders of the authoritarian consciousness and behavior who hardly care for the genuine *democratization of society* [since they are] overwhelmed with lust for power and *dictatorship over human needs*."⁶¹

As we shall see in the case of Dubravka Ugrešić, where there is an explicit reference to the work of György Konrád and his concept of anti-politics,⁶² here we find another allusion to the work of Central European dissidents in the (implicitly) feminist discourse. The reference is to the seminal works in Marxist revisionism by Ágnes Heller and later also by Ferenc Fehér and György Márkus, all written and published in the 1970s and early 1980s.⁶³ References to and reinterpretations of the Central European Marxist revisionist attempts, especially the work of Heller, were not completely absent from the earlier stage of the then Yugoslav feminist discourse; however, it certainly had different connotations in a moment of transition from one authoritarian regime to the other, where feminism needs to find its institutional and political niche. When the war broke out, a few months after its creation, the ŽEST decided to retreat from political life until the war ended. The members found that time impossible for entering the arena of party politics and refused to participate in the anti-democratic functioning of politics, although, as we can see, they continued their work in the grassroots anti-war feminist organizations.⁶⁴ This leads us back to the division of *political society* and *ethical civil society*, where the feminist actors, after making efforts to enter the arena of the political society, eventually retreated and continued on the basis of the workings of ethical civil society. However, the reason why the ŽEST retreats from participation in the political society is exactly the lack of possibilities for women's participation and the lack of democratic institutions that would enable this participation.

⁶⁰ Flyer of the ŽEST, 1991. Emphasis mine.

⁶¹ Ibidem. Emphasis mine.

⁶² Cf. G. Konrád, *Antipolitics: An Essay* (San Diego: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1984).

⁶³ A. Heller, *The Theory of Need in Marx* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1976); A. Heller, F. Fehér and G. Márkus, *Dictatorship over Needs* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1983).

⁶⁴ L. Mladjenovic and D. M. Hughes, "Feminist Resistance to War and Violence in Serbia" in *Frontline Feminisms: Women, War, and Resistance*, ed. M. R. Waller and J. Rycenga (New York: Garland Publications, 2000): 247-274.

A rather direct and coherent definition of the meaning of democracy from a feminist perspective was published as early as 1990 by another organization, closely related to the ŽEST, the Belgrade Women's Lobby, with the title "Appeal to the public."⁶⁵ The open letter clearly discouraged the voters from voting for certain parties, providing a list of the parties the Women's Lobby did not support, including Milošević's socialist party and Vuk Drašković's Serbian Movement of Renewal (*Srpski pokret obnove*, SPO). The list was followed by a description of the values with which the parties would gain support from their voter groups: "Vote for democracy, equal rights and the solidarity of difference."⁶⁶ This involved willingness to talk with one's political opponents, offering equality for men and women, equality for all nationalities, and intention to urge the growth of power of the groups that were discriminated against. Democratic parties should also be for immediate peace. Moreover, the Women's Lobby suggested that the voters, everything else being equal, give their ballots to a woman, rather than a man, thus bringing forth women's participation in parliament-level party politics.⁶⁷

Another women's group, the Women in Black [*Žene u crnom*] in Belgrade,⁶⁸ chose a similar reaction as the ŽEST. As Daša Duhaček put it, "women who are publicly present and issue a public call for responsibility, the Belgrade Women in Black have unambiguously and publicly declared their disloyalty to the governing structure of their state."⁶⁹ One of the expressions of this declaration were public protests, as the organization itself claims: "Women in Belgrade since 9 October [1991] each Wednesday manifest their absolute disagreement with the politics of the Serbian regime, with all nationalist politics which promote war with militarism and growing fascism."⁷⁰ This form of public protest, when a civil

⁶⁵ Beogradski ženski lobi, "Apel javnosti," *Žene za žene. Vanredni bilten SOS-a* 5 (November 1993): 26-27.

⁶⁶ Ibidem.

⁶⁷ Ibidem.

⁶⁸ About them, see Bilić, "Not in Our Name..."

⁶⁹ D. Duhaček, "The Making of Political Responsibility: Hannah Arendt and the Case of Serbia" in *Women and Citizenship in Central and Eastern Europe*, ed. Jasmina Lukić, Joanna Regulaska and Darja Zaviršek (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2006), 205-221, 210.

⁷⁰ "Feministkinje Beograda govore" (26th December 1992) [Feminists of Belgrade speak], *Antiratni bilten SOS-a* [Anti-war bulletin of the SOS hotline], 4. 8th March 1993. A collection of the Women in Black material was published in 1998: Nadežda Četković, ed. *Ženska politička perspektiva. 77 apela, zahteva, protesta, informacija, demonstracija, parola Beogradskog ženskog lobija* [Women's political perspectives. 77 appeals, de-

organization makes a move to occupy physical and discursive space at the same time, is another manifestation of civil activism, which, to rely on Duhaček's interpretation, means taking the responsibility required by one's citizenship. Not to participate in the politics of a totalitarian regime is an ethical demand, however, this has an effect only if a multitude of people do it, when non-participation becomes a public announcement and a public outcry.⁷¹ In Duhaček's interpretation, this was exactly what the Women in Black did. She also made it clear that Serbia in this period was not a democracy, thus the described and approved behavior was legitimate. Staša Zajović, a Women in Black activist, framed the aims of the group as follows: "I wanted our work to be visible, so that our work would be seen as a political choice, not just a feminine role, that our work had to be seen as a radical, anti-militarist critique, with a clear opposition and rejection of the nationalist-militarist regime which causes war and destruction."⁷² Women became active citizens exactly via their resistance to nationalism. Later, I will return to Zajović's subject position and choice of this position.

It was, however, not only the new "democracies" that faced criticism and refusal on behalf of the hereby analyzed feminist individuals and organizations. Women's involvement in politics, or rather, the lack of it, was viewed both as a new and an old development, that is, one deriving from the mistakes of the old socialist system, as well as of the xenophobia and nationalism of the new regimes. As Dubravka Stojanović put it, "totalitarianism in the name of a class moved to the totalitarianism in the name of a nation."⁷³ The criticism on behalf of the feminist authors in both directions was an important step in their approach to the state socialist Yugoslav regime, especially considering those authors who were active in the early phase of new Yugoslav feminism in the two decades before the war. Many of these groups and authors were accused by the new regimes of "Yugo-nostalgia" and their hostility towards nationalism was simplified in the nationalist discourse. The individual cases deserve specialized focus. Discussed in detail here are those that reflected on democracy as a concept and as a crucial factor in the current political situation,

mands, protests, information, slogans of the Belgrade women's lobby] (Belgrade: Beogradski ženski lobi – Ženske studija i komunikacija – INDOK centar, 1998).

⁷¹ Duhaček, "The Making of Political Responsibility", 211.

⁷² S. Zajović, "I am Disloyal (Nationalism, War, Personal Experience)," in *What Can We Do for Ourselves*, 49.

⁷³ Stojanović, "The Traumatic Circle of the Serbian Opposition," 458.

regarding gender and women's role in this setting. This last aspect is even more important since in my understanding of the (re)considerations on the nature of the political systems involve the first two points of my analysis, those of the creation of civil society and about the inclusion of women.

Most authors I focus on here treat the pre-1991 and post-1991 regimes as interrelated, though they pretended to distance one from another. For the non-nationalist feminists, however, the new regimes are direct descendants of the pre-1991 system. This argument is based on the elements of democracy lacking in the SFRJ, in Tudman's Croatia, and Milošević's Yugoslavia/Serbia, especially those which facilitated civil society, and also ensured women's equality and women's participation in it. Žarana Papić's important remark from the conference in 1994 entitled "What Can We Do for Ourselves?" reflected the self-distancing reaction of feminists from the new regime: "any (anticommunist) alternative to totalitarian communism does not necessarily have to be a democratic one."⁷⁴ Here, Papić wrote about the new systems, and in the meantime used a language to clearly distance herself from the socialist regimes too. In the article with the telling title "Dictatorship with Democratic Legitimacy", Vesna Pešić also connected the lack of democratic institutions and attitudes to the situation in Serbia at the time of the SFRJ, where "the dynamics of the market economy and a civil and democratic society were terminated."⁷⁵ Similarly, for one of the most prolific feminists in Croatia, Slavenka Drakulić, who was among those writers who left the country out of personal and political protest, the fact that nationalist forces came to power was exactly the result of the politics of the past decades:

one has no right to claim that people should have been aware of the consequences that nationalism—the tendency of the form nation-states—would bring. *They* had simply had no chance to become mature political beings, real citizens ready to participate and build a democratic society. When *people* in Croatia held the first free multiparty elections in 1990, as in most of the rest of East Europe, they voted primarily against the communists. Despite that, the new governments were all too ready to proclaim themselves the sole bearers of democracy, as if it were a fruit or a gift there for the taking.⁷⁶

Therefore, the votes gained out of protest against something necessarily could not lead to the creation of a democratic system, even less if we ac-

⁷⁴ Papić, "From State-Socialism to State-Nationalism," 56.

⁷⁵ V. Pešić, "The War for Ethnic States" in *The Road to War in Serbia*, 17.

⁷⁶ Slavenka Drakulić, *Balkan Express: fragments from the other side of war* (London: Hutchinson, 1993), 13 [emphases mine].

cept Pusić's evaluation that these votes, to a large extent, resulted from ignorance. Papić went further. "*We* are simply faced with the fact that we want to change the totalitarian East into 'new democracies' with unchanged people."⁷⁷ These use a language that creates distance between the people at large and the position of the speaker or writer.

Another similar argument is found in the writings of another central figure of the early feminist group, Vesna Pusić, who referred to the constraining dominance of collectives in totalitarianism. In her opinion, the concept of the "internal enemy" in itself was against the idea of democracy.⁷⁸ It should be noted here that Pusić, who is a sociologist by profession and was a founding member of the Zagreb-based *Žena i društvo* group, wrote the least feminism-centered texts among the former members of the group. By then she was already a member of the Croatian liberal party, the HNS. The values she stood up for since the early 1990s can much less be related to feminism than her pre-1991 agenda. For the political situation in the 1990s, she blamed the benevolent totalitarianism in the former Yugoslavia, which "contains no guarantee of safety to its citizens; moreover, it does not contain any guarantee of their status as citizens. Its main instrument is not open and systematic repression, but arbitrariness and uncertainty, the constant possibility that it might grow into open repression overnight."⁷⁹ Looking at the argumentation of the authors above, it is crucial to note that Drakulić, Papić, Pešić, and Pusić all placed the blame on an impersonated state and assumed that the voters who helped the new authoritarian regimes into power were unaware of what they did. This may suggest that "they" (the people) were deprived of their agency by the political power and were therefore less liable to take responsibility for their actions. However, the interpretation of these authors, precisely by pointing out the similarities of the pre-1991 and post-1991 regimes and how these deprive the voters of agency, called the attention to the need of the people becoming conscious citizens.

The entanglement of the old state socialist system and the new nationalist authoritarianism is recurrent and present in a rather subtle way in the texts of a third important founding member of the early group, Vesna Kesić, a sociologist and journalist. Kesić was one of the five intellectual

⁷⁷ Papić, "From State-Socialism to State-Nationalism," 57 [emphases mine].

⁷⁸ V. Pusić, "Dictatorship with Democratic legitimacy: Democracy versus Nation," *East European Politics and Society* 8, 3 (Fall 1994), 383.

⁷⁹ *Ibidem*, 385.

women in the “witch trial”⁸⁰ and one of the two women who decided to stay in Zagreb and take an active role in the anti-war activism, mostly in the work of the CZŽŽR. She saw the roots of the problem as one overarching the twentieth century history of Yugoslavia and its successor/member states. She emphasized the failure of the Titoist regime to deal with the heritage of the interwar and WWII regimes in the territory of the former Yugoslavia:

We were motivated by our belief that, in post-war societies and countries in transition, facing the past is a basic precondition for establishing sustained peace and democratic development. If significant parts of our past are suppressed or excluded from collective memory, this could reinstate the ‘old power relations’ of socialist and nationalist regimes. Gender inequality and discrimination played a crucial role in these regimes. To avoid their return, both women and men have to participate in the process of democratic development and maintaining collective memory.⁸¹

She emphasized the unfulfilled project of gender equality under state socialism and claimed that women should be equal participants in the “democratic development,” signaling that this had not yet happened.⁸² She saw the possibility of this development only in the future and refused to accept that it had happened in the previous systems. Kesić was very reflective about the ethnic and gender dimensions of transition too saying, “During the early 1990s, the former Yugoslavia underwent a double transition/transformation: from socialism to ‘the rule of free market democracy’ and from a multinational federation to new nation states mostly based on ethnicity.” The use of the inverted commas does not only question the existence and even success (with respect to the creation of a certain politico-economic system as such, as well as the beneficial nature of this system for the population) of free market democracy, but also directs the readers’ attention to the questionable existence of the individual words in the phrase: free, market, democracy. Kesić created a chiastic relationship between the terms, in order to contrast one to the other. In the case of the first couple of concepts, the second one may not exist, though there is a claim for its value and existence (as implied by the inverted commas), whereas in the case of the second couple of concepts, the new nation state

⁸⁰ See note 40.

⁸¹ V. Kesić, “Foreword to the Second Edition,” in *Women Recollecting Memories*, 10.

⁸² “Suppressed and censored memory then becomes the major obstacle to normal life, renewal, democratization, and the establishment of permanent peace in the region.” Ibidem, 11. Her arguments are joined by the ones of B. Kašić, “In Place of An introduction” in *Women Recollecting Memories*, 13-16.

does exist, though it does not facilitate democracy and freedom, as Kesić's conclusion on women's reaction to these processes shows:

"Both transitions were characterized by a strong policy on gender and ethnic identity; women became markers of differentiation on ethnic, cultural, and political levels. [...] Beginning in the 1980s, women enthusiastically welcomed the democratization process. After the first multinational [sic—'multiparty' was meant, mistake in the translation. ZsL]⁸³ elections were held in Yugoslavia and the nationalist party leaders came into power, however, a reversion to male dominated systems began in the new states."⁸⁴

The choice of subjects in Kesić's text, what "women" here means and how we learn about their "enthusiasm" toward the democratization process and who these women exactly were, deserves more attention. "Enthusiasm" is beyond doubt a word describing emotions, which are hard to measure and synthesize for a group of individuals. However, in this context it is measureable from participation polls, among many things. Kesić did not make the mistake of suggesting that "women" as a group had a unanimous reaction of "reversion to male dominated systems," being aware that not all women were anti-war and anti-nationalist, as was proven by the nationalist women's NGO's and the mothers' movements. By focusing instead on the features of the new regime's "male-domination," her text escaped the trap of essentialization, whereas it was able to speak about the consequences of the changes with regard to women's life, independently of how women personally *experience* this male domination in politics. Something that would have required cautiously prepared and conducted research.

The trap of essentialization was not always avoided in all the significant feminist works, as in the case of some texts by Rada Iveković, where she was much less reflective of what subjectivities she evoked, whereas she successfully remained equally critical of both systems: "*Women do not feel responsible for the scandalous war* between the former Yugoslav republics, because they have been made historically irresponsible, that is, powerless."⁸⁵ This statement was one of those few that deserved the criticism as essentialization, attributing emotions to women about which we

⁸³ See the original text, in the Croatian part of the book: *Žene obnavljaju sjećanja*, 10.

⁸⁴ Kesić, "Foreword to the Second Edition," 10.

⁸⁵ R. Iveković, "The New Democracy – With Women or Without Them?" *Beyond Yugoslavia: Politics, Economics, and Culture in a Shattered Community*, ed. S.P. Ramet and L. Adamovich (Boulder: Westview Press, 1995), 398 [emphasis mine].

cannot have knowledge. Therefore the author appropriated the voice and feelings of other individuals to bring forth her argument. Despite the presumably benevolent motivations behind such a speech act, it has just as many pitfalls as merits. R. Iveković even left out of consideration that many women actively participated in the work of the nationalist parties, joined the army, or the “patriotic” women’s groups.⁸⁶ She left these women out of her category of the “politically more active women,”⁸⁷ which to her meant only and exclusively the founders of the anti-war, anti-nationalist feminist organizations, mostly originating from the *Žena i društvo* group. The imprecision in identifying which women are included leads to a rather exclusionary position, which ignores the political subjectivity of women that the author does not agree with. On the other hand, Rada Iveković had significant insights about the exclusion of women from politics, intended to make them apolitical and uncritical followers of those in power. She was right to assert that women’s political participation was decreasing already before the break-up of socialist Yugoslavia and even more radically afterwards, accompanied by many discursive acts, legislative actions and institutions restraining women’s rights.⁸⁸

Besides the narrowly interpreted political sphere, the academic and civil activist discourses, there were other places where feminists gave voice to their positions. One of the terrains where Kesić pointed out the development of this “male domination” and the growing patriarchalism in the new regimes was the symbolic politics and the symbolic actions of the new government, for example in the renaming of public spaces. Besides those two cases in Zagreb which probably gained the most attention, that is the re-renaming of the Square of the Republic to Square Jelačić (with the reconstruction of the equestrian statue with the slight change of its new direction “against Belgrade”) and the Square of the Victims of Fascism to the Square of Great Croatsians, Kesić noted the disappearance of the street names of partisan women which were replaced by names that were politically-symbolically important for the new system, whereas the name of Marshall Tito square remained the same. These renamings were even more indicative if one looks at Tuđman’s relationship to Tito as opposed to the “revisionist” gender approach of the Tuđman nationalist regime which condemned and aimed at reverting the communist/partisan emancipation of women.

⁸⁶ About this, cf. Žarkov, *The Body of War*.

⁸⁷ Iveković, “The New Democracy,” 396.

⁸⁸ Ibidem, 399-400.

The visual artist Sanja Iveković's project *GEN XX* between 1997 and 2001 reflected the same problem. The series of photo works were first published as magazine advertisements in the journals *Arkzin*, *Zaposlena*, *Frakcija*, *Kruh i ruže*, and *Kontura*, but were also placed on the walls of the University of Zagreb. The fashion models in the pictures were in contrast to the texts describing them: these were short biographies of women who fought in the NOB (*Narodnooslobodilačka borba*, the People's Liberation Struggle in WWII) and were murdered for political reasons at a very young age.⁸⁹ They were emblematic figures of the SFRJ mythology, there were streets, factories, and public spaces named after them, like the Baković Sisters Street or the Nada Dimić Factory. After 1991 these names were abolished from the public spaces. S. Iveković's project reflected on the market, capitalism, and on the different models of beauty and femininity, but in the meantime it was also a critical gesture against the regime which pretended to cultivate the achievements and sacrifices of these women, whereas in fact it turned them into disposable products and brands, emptied of the original meanings and especially the social and political significance they bore from the point of women's equality and feminism.

Another crucial meeting point of criticism of the democratic deficit of the pre- and post-1991 regimes and feminist arguments is that of the literary essay and postmodern literary correspondence. The best example of the latter is the work of another feminist emigrating and an "all-(ex)-Yugoslav" correspondence between four authors.⁹⁰ The essays of Dubravka Ugrešić first appeared in various print media and were later published in the volume *The Culture of Lies*. Of all the feminist anti-war texts, these probably received the widest international attention. Ugrešić, a writer and literary scholar, who was experimenting with women's voices and authorship in postmodern literary texts from the early 1980s, was not an active member of the feminist groups before 1991. She became more engaged as part of her anti-war stance and after seeing the injustices women (and men) suffer due to the war. She emigrated from Croatia in 1992 and continued to write her "anti-political essays" where she reflected

⁸⁹ With one exception, Nera Šafarić, who was the artist's mother and who returned after two years in Auschwitz, in 1945.

⁹⁰ J. Tešanović, *The Diary of a Political Idiot: Normal Life in Belgrade* (San Francisco: Midnight Editions, 2000).

R. Iveković et al., *Vjetar ide na jug i obrće se na sjever. / Veter gre, proti poldnevu in se obrača proti polnoči* (Beograd: Radio B92, 1994).

upon this entanglement of the two regimes. She saw the new regimes' assertion of leader cults as the continuation of the Titoist leader cult. Moreover, as far as feminism is concerned, if we speak about Pusić turning away from feminism, a different turning point was brought about in the thinking of Ugrešić: with the growing anti-nationalism and misogyny during the war, she took an increasingly stronger feminist position. However, her criticism of this misogyny did not turn into a positive evaluation of the state socialist system. As it was explained in the title essay *The Culture of Lies*, "In a milieu that has hidden its deeply rooted patriarchalism behind socialist formulae about the equality of women and men, 'democratization' has brought a new freedom for patriarchalism."⁹¹ Ugrešić in one sentence was able to summarize how "democratization," in the post-Yugoslav sphere meant not a transition to a Western liberal democratic system, but the unleashing of patriarchalism and nationalism.

The reflections of Lepa Mladenović on democracy and nationalism are intriguing examples of how individual stances and one's belonging to a group can be balanced or at least made explicit. Mladenović's "personal story" is mostly an argument against nationalism and focuses less on state socialism. Similar to the already quoted Staša Zajović, Mladenović was present in the discourse both as an individual author and as an author of group publications, mostly in the "colors" of the Women in Black. She has very idiosyncratic and outspoken statements as an individual too, which emphasize that to her nationalism excludes the pluralism of ideas. This can be compared to Pusić's idea about the discursive production of the "internal enemy:" "Most probably because, for some of us, nationalism was not only an attitude, where everyone has a right to one [attitude]."⁹² The use of personal pronouns suggests the application of a *communal* narrative mixed with a *personal* one.⁹³ The title of the essay explains this choice and makes it a conscious one: "Autonomous Women's Center against Sexual Violence, Belgrade. *A Personal Story*" (emphasis by author). Mladenović's plural stands for the members of a group, an organization, however, already the title emphasized that it was her individual, personal perspective that delineated how the story was told. It

⁹¹ D. Ugrešić, *The Culture of Lies: Antipolitical Essays* (London: Phoenix, 1996), 77.

⁹² L. Mladenović, "Autonomous Women's Center against Sexual Violence, Belgrade. *A Personal Story*," <http://www.womenngo.org.rs/english/reports/history.pdf>, accessed May 12, 2011.

⁹² Ibidem.

⁹³ Cf. Lanser, *Fictions of Authority: Women Writers and Narrative Voice*.

should also be noted that she was very careful about not attaching any position to all members of the group and therefore always spoke about "some of us" and not of "us" or "we." She was calling out for solidarity amongst women and saw sisterhood as a chance to organize against nationalism as such and suggested that most effectively this could happen across borders: "one of the feminist goals in the time of nationalism is cooperation with women 'across the front line.' Thus, I'm one of those who were frequently asked: 'Why don't you criticize others?' Yes, I have chosen to denounce the Serbian regime, as in 1991 I found myself in Serbia, with the privilege of a Serbian name; I have decided to leave it for others to criticize the governments and regimes of their respective countries."⁹⁴ The function of this "sisterhood across borders" idea is not only useful for strengthening a traditional idea of feminism, it has more pragmatic considerations, namely to avoid sharing any position with local nationalists by criticizing nationalists in the other country. Mladenović's stance provides an explanation for the impossibility for the anti-nationalist feminists and the nationalist feminists to share a platform, and it also posits a strong example of feminist criticism of nationalism within democracies.

Conclusion

Feminism, the hereby discussed non-nationalist Yugoslav feminism in the early 1990s, has a demanding perspective on democracy, requiring it to stand up to its standards, to take its central concepts seriously. Despite the multifaceted ways of argumentation and the multiplicity of viewpoints, the arguments around the topics of women's participation, civil society, and active citizenship, nationalism and the role of the pre-1991 and post-1991 regimes converge towards a coherent feminist picture about what democracy should look like. The authors mentioned, quoted, and analyzed here, intentionally or as a "side effect" of argumentation for different goals, organized their definition of democracy around civil society, women's participation, and the opposition to the exclusivism of nationalism. They did so through personal, authorial, and group utterances, and their discourse often includes a strong criticism of both state socialist and nationalist authoritarianism, to which they arrived exactly by the interpretation of democracy as a notion through the above mentioned three as-

⁹⁴ Mladenović, "Autonomous Women's Center against Sexual Violence..."

pects. In the meantime, as the non-nationalist feminist discourse in Croatia and Serbia was entangled with the Western, in this case mostly US, feminist discourses, and due to its almost two decades of pre-1991 tradition, this discourse brought into being ideas which could be employed later as valid criticisms of political systems in the region after democratic reform. The layers of texts from the 1970s and 1980s, then from the 1990s, from the former Yugoslavia, then Serbia and Croatia, as well as the US and the West, joined in the late 1990s by post-colonial theories which at that time became important in the successor states, have interfered with meanings and have created new ones. They may serve as a powerful basis for democracy being taken seriously.

1989 After 1989

Remembering the End of State Socialism in East-Central Europe

JAMES MARK, MURIEL BLAIVE, ADAM HUDEK,
ANNA SAUNDERS, AND STANISŁAW TYSZKA

Given the upsurge in popular and academic interest in how countries in east-central Europe have sought to “come to terms” with their state socialist past, it is remarkable how relatively little attention has been paid to the memory of the system’s collapse and the way in which the revolutions of 1989 have been represented.¹ This absence is particularly striking given the fact that in the two decades since 1989, the manner in which the moment of communism’s collapse and the post-socialist system’s birth was narrated became a source of great political contestation. Addressing the Czech Republic, Germany, Hungary, Poland, and Slovakia, this chapter will chart and compare the various ways in which the collapse of communism has been understood across the region. It will explore not only those who have attempted to make 1989 a part of a positive post-socialist national identity based around democracy and national freedom, but also those who have rejected this political vision of 1989, instrumentalized the memory of a “victorious 1989” for their own political gain, or refused to

¹ For some exceptions, see J. Mark, *The Unfinished Revolution. Making Sense of the Communist Past in Central-Eastern Europe* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2010), 1–26; J. Krapfl, “The Sacred and the Velvet Revolution,” *Kosmas: Czechoslovak and Central European Journal* 14 (2001): 51–63; J. Kubik and A. Linch, “The Original Sin of Poland’s Third Republic: Discounting ‘Solidarity’ and its Consequences for Political Reconciliation,” *Polish Sociological Review* 153 (2006): 9–38; M. Blaive, “The 1989 Revolution as a non-lieu de mémoire” in *Proceedings from the conference ‘1989–2009: Society. History. Politics’*, ed. A. Gjuričová (Heinrich Böll Stiftung Prague), <http://www.boell.cz/navigation/19-856.html> (accessed August 17, 2012); A. Karaminova and M. Jung, eds., *Visualisierungen des Umbruchs: Strategien und Semantiken von Bildern zum Ende der kommunistischen Herrschaft im östlichen Europa* (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 2011).

commemorate an event they view as a betrayal, as a moment of great lost opportunities, or as a historical mythology that provides “cultural ballast” to support unwanted forms of western political and economic colonization. Finally, this chapter will address those who have rejected these politicized understandings of 1989 *at the national level* and have looked to link their own *local* experiences of revolution to a more transnational message of European or global unity, or the spread of world peace and human rights.

Remembering 1989 in the 1990s

During the collapse of communism itself, and in the first years that followed its demise, a more consensual reading of “1989” as a popular victory or national re-awakening that represented the heroic endpoint of a series of struggles, and that was a legitimate source of national pride, was found in many countries. In Czechoslovakia in 1989, Václav Havel, who would soon become President, described the “Velvet revolution” as a return to Czechoslovak democratic traditions. In Hungary too, the fall of communism was often framed as the culmination of nineteenth and twentieth century struggles for national freedom and democracy.² There was very little contestation of the idea that 1989 represented a meaningful break with the past:³ in both Hungary and Poland, for instance, the first post-socialist democratic coalitions did not look to contest or overturn the terms of the 1989 settlement—as those from a variety of political traditions would later do.⁴

Nevertheless, the emergence of a commemorative tradition around 1989 as an important end-point in a country’s journey to freedom and democracy was very slow, patchy, and seldom elicited much popular enthusiasm. In the first decades after the end of communism, few memorials or public spaces in capital cities were named after the revolution. Partly

² On 1989 as the culmination of nineteenth century struggles for freedom, see G. Itzész, “Ritual and National Self-Interpretation: The Nagy Imre Funeral,” *Religion and Society in Central and Eastern Europe* 1 (November 2005): 1–19; R. Brubaker and M. Feischmidt, “1848 in 1998: The politics of commemoration in Hungary, Romania, and Slovakia,” *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 44 (2002): 712.

³ Mark, *Unfinished Revolution*, 4–6.

⁴ Indeed, where a conservative coalition in power did try to overturn the Round Table settlement with a lustration law—as the brief Olszewski government tried to do in 1992—it was ousted.

this was due to the elite, non-participatory nature of the change of system in most places: there were simply very few public spaces that could be convincingly linked with overcoming the previous regime. The site in Prague where student demonstrators were beaten—the rather anticlimactic high point of conflict between the regime and the people—became an unofficial site of wreath laying, but has failed to gain any official character.⁵ Budapest and Warsaw, which saw virtually no public conflict alongside the elite Round Table negotiated transitions out of communism, established no major public spaces to commemorate 1989.⁶ Where such places did emerge, it was much later, and only in the few capital cities that saw popular revolutionary participation. Romania was the only country that witnessed widespread and deadly confrontation between the society and the regime: the square from which demonstrators forced Ceaușescu to flee by helicopter (after a rally turned against him in central Bucharest) was named Revolution Square, and, in 2005, it gained a Memorial of Re-birth dedicated to the struggles of the Revolution.⁷ Scenes of western and eastern Germans breaching “the Berlin Wall” were to become a global visual shorthand for the end of communism and a divided Europe; to commemorate this moment, the city inaugurated, in 2010, the “Square of 9 November 1989” at Bornholmer Strasse, the spot where the Iron Curtain may first have been breached by crowds in November 1989.⁸

Nor did strong commemorative traditions initially emerge. Certainly, some countries—the Czech Republic, Slovakia, and Hungary—established official holidays celebrating 1989, whilst in Germany unofficial com-

⁵ Nor did Bratislava gain any space for commemoration. J. Daniška J. Majchrák, “Boj o November,” *Týždeň* 47 (2009), <http://www.tyzden.sk/casopis/2009/47/boj-o-novem-ber.html> (accessed September 19, 2011).

⁶ Ex-communist President Aleksander Kwaśniewski did however put the Round Table on public display in the presidential palace in Warsaw from 2004. In Hungary, images of the Round Table do make up the commonplace visual narratives of 1989; see R. Uitz, “Communist Secret Services on the Screen” in *Past for the Eyes: East European Representations of Communism in Cinema and Museums After 1989*, eds. P. Ápor and O. Sarkisova (Budapest: Central European University Press, 2008), 57.

⁷ Romania is the exception in the region, although it is not dealt with in this chapter. Here, memorials to 1989 have sprung up in many cities, particularly those with strong links to the revolution and local victims to remember; see e.g. S. Grama, “In Between Places of Remembrance and Realms of Memory: The 15 Year Commemoration of the Romanian Revolution in Timișoara,” *Philobiblon* 10/11 (2005–6): 310–41.

⁸ This observation may explain the predominance of examples from Germany and Romania in the one edited work on visual representation of 1989, see *Visualisierungen des Umbruchs*, eds. Karaminova and Jung.

memorative activity grew over time on November 9th, marking the day the Berlin Wall was breached.⁹ The meaning of these days was often ambiguous and incapable of eliciting much public enthusiasm, however. To take an example: in the Czech Republic in 2000, November 17th became a public holiday as a “day to honor the struggles for freedom and democracy.” The choice of date, which marked not only the end of communism but also November 17, 1939 when nine students were executed for their resistance to the Nazi occupation, enabled 1989 to be placed in a longer tradition of the Czech people’s struggle for democracy. Nevertheless, it was not considered a particularly important holiday: the ten-year anniversary in 1999 saw little state commemorative activity. There *was* a private exhibit organized on Wenceslas Square, but this was more akin to a nostalgic reminiscence of the “good old days” of economic security, at a time when the hardships of the transition were being most acutely felt, rather than a denunciation of communism.¹⁰ Only in 2009 did this anniversary become more widely supported by the state and, even then, participation remained limited.

Likewise in Germany, dates connected with 1989 were often problematic and failed to generate significant public enthusiasm in the years after the revolution. This was in part because any attempt to integrate this date into a more positive history of freedom and democracy was deemed less important than the commemoration of the darker history of twentieth-century Germany, in which the memory of the victim dominated over the resistor, and a tradition of foregrounding the nation’s crimes (so-called negative nationalism) was regarded as crucial. As historian Martin Sabrow put it: “the joy over 1989/90 cannot make good the pain of 1933/45.”¹¹ November 9th, the date on which the Wall fell, was particularly problematic in this regard, as it also marked the Nazi pogrom against the Jews in 1938. Thus celebratory acts in remembrance of 1989 had to search for an acceptable form, capable of sitting alongside the dominant aesthetics of Holocaust remembrance. November 9th was deemed unsuitable as a national holiday, leading instead to the choice of October 3rd, the day on

⁹ S. C. Pearce, “Delete, Restart, or Rewind? Post-1989 Public Memory Work in East-Central Europe,” *Sociology Compass* 5, 4 (2011): 256. In Slovakia it was not a public holiday but rather a day of remembrance, the “Day of the struggle for Freedom and Democracy.”

¹⁰ There was some interest on television (special reports, the broadcasting of 1989 events).

¹¹ M. Sabrow, “‘Wende’ oder ‘Revolution’? Der Herbstumbruch 1989 und die Geschichtswissenschaft,” 9, [www.zzf-pdm.de/Portals/images/default/09_04_02_Vortrag_Wende_oder_Revolution_\(Potsdam\).pdf](http://www.zzf-pdm.de/Portals/images/default/09_04_02_Vortrag_Wende_oder_Revolution_(Potsdam).pdf) (accessed September 28, 2012).

which unification officially took place in 1990. As little more than an administrative date, however, it was only widely celebrated among the political elite and lacked the emotive strength of November 9th. Indeed, commemorations of 1989 in the 1990s were muted, especially in light of material and social difficulties that followed unification. The fifth anniversary in 1994 was marked by numerous small-scale ceremonies in Berlin, from the re-opening of the newly renovated Oberbaumbrücke, a bridge and former crossing point between East and West Berlin, to a “chain of lights” created by residents from neighboring eastern and western districts to demonstrate their solidarity.¹² Such early events focused, however, on the promise of the future, rather than any overt celebration of the past. By the time of the tenth anniversary, commemorations in Berlin became more centralized, with a week of commemorative events organized by district authorities and the federal government, yet press reports commented on the “lukewarm” atmosphere and the lack of genuine enthusiasm.¹³ The ambivalent atmosphere was perhaps best demonstrated by a huge banner that hung above Alexanderplatz reading “We were the people.” By placing one of the central slogans of 1989—“We are the people”—into the past tense, the banner provocatively reminded locals of the demonstrations on this square, while also calling on them to reflect on their responsibilities in the present.¹⁴

The Contestation of the 1989 Settlement from Right and Left

Nevertheless, the absence of consensual 1989 traditions that celebrated freedom, democracy, and national self-determination was not simply the result of the lack of popular revolutions that lent themselves to clearly directed mythologization, or a general disenchantment with the direction of post-socialist societies. By the mid-1990s, the problems of the present were being linked more and more to the inadequacies of the process of

¹² See *Berliner Zeitung*, November 10, 1994.

¹³ A. Rollmann, “Die Feiern sind vorbei: Das war das Volk,” *Berliner Zeitung*, November 11, 1999, 21 (see also caption on p. 19).

¹⁴ U. Aulich, “‘Wir waren das Volk’ – ein Poster zwischen Stolz und Melancholie,” *Berliner Zeitung*, October 9–10, 1999, 27; on ambiguity in film representations of the fall of the Berlin Wall see S. B. Pedersen, “The Aesthetics of a Collapsing Border: The Fall of the Berlin Wall in German Cinema,” Paper presented at the conference “From the Iron Curtain to the Schengen Area: Bordering Communist and Postcommunist Europe,” Vienna, September 28–30, 2011.

transition. 1989 was not simply considered of minor importance: it was the problem itself. The year became seen as the starting point that explained the varying disappointments of post-communism for a variety of political traditions, whose differing critiques of the transition meant that they could not even find unity in their disillusionment with 1989. An array of different political forces—conservative nationalists, right-wing populists, political Catholics, new leftist radicals, and some former communists—began to contest the settlement.

In countries where former communists had returned to power, such as Poland (1993) and Hungary (1994), new conservative political formations—such as Solidarity Electoral Action (in power 1997–2001) and Fidesz (1998–2002)—developed unifying programs based on powerful critiques of 1989. In Hungary, the negotiated settlements of that year were increasingly under attack from the anti-communist right,¹⁵ headed by a newly emerging populist conservative party Fidesz, led by Viktor Orbán.¹⁶ Fidesz itself had never been reconciled to the negotiated transition. At the reburial of Imre Nagy in June 1989, Orbán had called for political forces not to compromise in their dealings with the communists, and for the withdrawal of Soviet troops; moreover, his party had refused to sign the transitional pact, which had guaranteed former communists' survival into a new era.¹⁷ Orbán was critical of the first conservative administration's refusal to pursue the lustration of former apparatchiks. He viewed their anti-communism—which sought a return to the conservatism of the inter-war period rather than fight the leftist threat of the present—as an anachronism: in a speech in 1992, Orbán criticized their invocations of anti-

¹⁵ György Litván placed the shift at the 1992 anniversary of 1956; G. Litván, "Politikai Beszéd 1956-ról- 1989 után" in *Évkönyv 2002. Magyarország a Jelenkorban* (Budapest: 1956-os Intézet, 2002), 258–263 and 261.

¹⁶ András Bozóki saw this as a shift from symbolic politics which bolstered a new political system and its institutions as a whole, to a symbolic politics which was used to bolster particular interest groups and divided Hungary into two; see A. Bozóki, "Consolidation or Second Revolution? The Politics of the New Right in Hungary," *Slovak Foreign Policy Affairs* 1 (2005): 17–28.

¹⁷ He had also been very critical at Nagy's reburial of reform communists' sudden celebration of Imre Nagy and the other martyrs of the revolution: 'We cannot understand that those who were eager to slander the revolution and its prime minister have suddenly changed into great supporters of Imre Nagy. Nor can we understand that the party leaders, who made us study from books that falsified the Revolution, now rush to touch the coffins as if they were charms of good luck.' Quoted in K. P. Benziger, "The Funeral of Imre Nagy: Contested History and the Power of Memory Culture," *History & Memory* 12, 2 (2000): 153.

communist semi-feudal inter-war Hungary that, “by and large represented a rotten, decaying world that would never again return to Hungary.”¹⁸ Fidesz, by contrast, promised to overturn the terms of the transition that had been established in 1989, and instigate a new revolution. They would build a new “civic-bourgeois (*polgári*) Hungary” based on the support of the middle class. From their viewpoint, both the anti-bourgeois state socialist policies of the communist period and the neo-liberal shock therapy of the first ex-communist coalition government (1994–1998) had undermined the security and status of the Hungarian bourgeoisie.¹⁹ Fidesz leaders argued that the middle class, despite being the embodiment of the values of patriotism and self-reliance, had continued to be victimized long after the collapse of communism.²⁰ To rectify this, they needed to purge the country of the leftist elites who had monopolized political and economic power since the 1940s, and whose influence had not declined since 1989. In the elections of 1998—which they won—they therefore rejected any positive evaluation of 1989, instead promising a new revolution to compensate for its inadequacies.²¹ This perception of politics as the implementation of a new revolution was revived once again after Fidesz captured more than two thirds of parliamentary seats in the elections of 2010. Its leader Viktor Orbán called his victory a “revolution in the voting booth,” in which voters, “realized a lesson of 20 years” standing, during which time it had seemed impossible to change the system. He further suggested that his party’s dominance would now allow them to “destroy an oligarchical system in which power was abused [replacing it with] a system of national co-operation.”²² Fidesz’s electoral landslide gave them

¹⁸ Quoted in C. Kiss, “From Liberalism to Conservatism: The Federation of Young Democrats in Post-Communist Hungary,” *East European Politics and Societies* 16, 3 (2002): 741–742.

¹⁹ B. Fowler, “Concentrated Orange: Fidesz and the Remaking of the Hungarian Centre-right, 1994–2002,” *Journal of Communist Studies and Transition Politics* 20, 3 (2004): 80–114. The Hungarian middle class was hit by the so-called Bokros Package.

²⁰ In fact both left and right appealed to the ‘losers’ of the transition; the ex-communists to the working-class and Fidesz to the middle-class.

²¹ Z. Ripp, *Eltékozolt Esélyek. A rendszerváltás értelme és értelmezései* (Budapest: Napvilág Kiadó, 2009), 159–161.

²² “Orbán: forradalom történt a szavazófülkékben,” *HVG*, April 25, 2010; on the political framing of 1956 and 1989 as two failed revolutions, and 2010 as the true end to the “old order,” see also *Proclamation for National Co-operation* (2010): “At the end of the first decade of the twenty-first century, after forty-six years of occupation, dictatorship and two confusing decades of transition, Hungary at last recaptured its right to self-determination and capabilities. The struggle for self-determination of the Hungarian na-

sufficient representation to introduce a new constitution,²³ a development that Orbán framed as an answer to the failure of the Round Tables of 1989 sufficiently to revise the 1949 communist-era constitution. Introduced in 2012, it concentrated power more fully in the ruling party, decreased the power of “checking” state institutions, such as the Constitutional Court, to block political change, and articulated, in a particularly controversial section known as the “National Proclamation,” the importance of Christian Hungarian traditions and values for citizenship. It also enabled Fidesz to pack important state organizations, such as the Budget Council, and the National Judicial Office, effectively stifling any future government’s power to overturn their new settlement.²⁴

In Poland, too, the economic implications of the 1989 settlement were increasingly criticized by the mid-1990s. In the view of many on the right, the fact that former communists had been left in a dominant economic position in 1989 was the original sin of the new Poland. This position received its fullest academic expression in the work of sociologist Jadwiga Staniszkis, who presented the early 1980s as the most important moment of transition, when communist apparatchiks began to exchange their political power for economic status, beginning a process of appropriating state enterprises and transforming them into semi-private companies.²⁵ She argued that the Round Table talks of 1989—in which liberal oppositionists sat down with representatives of the regime to negotiate the system away—were merely the opening up of political power for parts of the democratic opposition, whilst economic power still remained with the former communist *nomenklatura*. From this perspective, the transition

tion began in 1956 with a glorious but failed revolution. The struggle continued after the change of regime with political pacts that instead of bringing freedom brought helplessness, instead of independence brought indebtedness, instead of prosperity brought poverty, instead of hope and brotherhood brought a deep psychological, political and economic crisis. In the spring of 2010 the Hungarian nation once more collected its remaining strength and in the voting booth it accomplished a successful revolution. The Hungarian people achieved this victory with the overthrow of the old regime and the establishment of a new one, the regime of national cooperation,” www.parlament.hu/irom39/00047/00047_e.pdf (accessed April 30, 2013).

²³ J. Rupnik, “How Things Went Wrong,” *Journal of Democracy* 23, 3 (2012): 133–135.

²⁴ M. Bánkuti, G. Halmai and K. L. Scheppele, “Disabling the Constitution,” *Journal of Democracy* 23, 3 (2012): 145.

²⁵ See e.g. J. Staniszkis, *The Dynamics of the Breakthrough in Eastern Europe* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1991) and idem, “Political Capitalism in Poland,” *East European Politics and Societies* 5 (1991): 127–141.

process had failed to enforce a clear break in economic ownership around 1989, which had in turn led to the ineffective functioning of the market;²⁶ rather, it set the conditions for the rise of “political capitalism” in which the former *nomenklatura* prospered through illegal transfers of capital from the public sector to the private sector, and through irregularities in legislation, licensing, and public procurement.²⁷ Moreover, for those on the right, the continued economic dominance of the one time *nomenklatura* was argued to be an important factor in former communists’ return to power in 1993–1997 and 2001–2005, developments which then blocked any attempts at dealing with the communist past more broadly.

In this context, 1989 was seen as a failure and betrayal that could be blamed on former leftist and liberal members of the opposition movement. According to some nationalist critiques, the liberal wing of the Solidarity movement which had negotiated the system away was not simply naïve, politically inept, or misguided in allowing the communists to retain power politically and economically; rather they accused it of being closer in ideological outlook to former communists than to the rest of the Solidarity movement. Thus, for some on the right, their former colleagues in Solidarity now became recast as communist collaborators. They claimed that these negotiations were effectively a pact between liberals from Solidarity (the so-called “pinks”) and communists (the “reds”) to engineer a political system that favored the liberal-left and diminished the role of nationalism, the Catholic Church, and traditional Polish culture.²⁸

Wiesław Chrzanowski, a Stalinist-era prisoner, the first non-communist chairman of the Polish parliament, the *Sejm* (1991–1993), and president of the Christian-National Alliance (1989–1994), had refused to participate in the Round Table talks, and later argued that the selection of its participants had had far-reaching consequences for Polish politics after 1989:

²⁶ This was argued by e.g. Andrzej Sadowski and Krzysztof Dzierżawski.

²⁷ These thinkers had their political followers. Jarosław Kaczyński referred to Staniszkis quite often. Ideas from Sadowski were used mostly by marginal right-wing politicians, such as Janusz Korwin-Mikke from the Real Politics Union (*Unia Polityki Realnej*).

²⁸ On the theories that surround the deal between “pinks” and “reds,” see J. Kurczewski, “The Spoiled Drama of Emancipation: Conflicting Narratives,” *Polish Sociological Review* 4, 168 (2009): 547–554. The idea that post-communist liberals had come from communist families, had “leftist periods” in the 1960s and early 1970s before their conversion to liberalism, and hence were not true anti-communists, was argued by the right in Hungary too. It emerged very soon after the transition; for an example, “Apák és Fiúk” *Magyar Fórum*, March 31, 1990: 2.

Starting this new initiative gave the [communist] authorities an opportunity to pre-select appropriate opposition members to become partners in talks. To a large extent, they wanted partners of a leftist lineage, often former party comrades or Catholics from circles which had formerly been given concessions to function officially. [...] Finally, for the leftist opposition, which is a somewhat simplified term, it was an opportunity to eliminate or limit the influence of the right wing of the opposition, the illegal opposition, I mean. They were apprehensive that once communism collapsed, our political arena would be dominated by nationalist and Christian-democratic elements.²⁹

The most popular symbol of betrayal for the right-wingers became the Magdalenka Talks, a series of meetings between the government and opposition representatives, which took place before and during the Round Table talks. The reason for the black legend of Magdalenka lay in the rather informal atmosphere of those partly televised meetings, with such former dissidents as Lech Wałęsa or Adam Michnik fraternizing and drinking vodka with figures the right considered “communist criminals,” such as General Czesław Kiszczak.³⁰

To some other right-wing critics of the Round Table talks, who had initially viewed them as a necessary compromise, what happened next was crucial. The conservative Kaczyński twins—who would later take power as president and prime minister of the government from 2005—could not argue that the discussions were a conspiracy as they themselves took part in them; nevertheless, they could criticize its political and economic consequences. According to such right-wing critics, the agreement had paved the way for secularism, individualism, and a morally neutral state that merely “protected pluralism” but not national values. From this viewpoint, a post-socialist liberal system was not seen as the rejection of communism but rather its obvious successor and ally, as an anti-religious, modernizing, anti-traditional, anti-national political ideology that had united liberals and ex-communists in 1989 against the right.³¹

²⁹ *Communism's Negotiated Collapse: The Polish Round Table Talks of 1989 Ten Years Later, A Conference at the University of Michigan, April 7–10, 1999*, transcript of the conference proceedings available at <http://webapps.lsa.umich.edu/ii/polishroundtable/rtsession1.html> (accessed September 28, 2012).

³⁰ On post-socialist attempts to place Anna Walentynowicz, rather than Lech Wałęsa, as the figurehead of Solidarity in national memory, see M. Szporer. “Anna Walentynowicz and the Legacy of Solidarity in Poland (review article),” *Journal of Cold War Studies*, 13, 1 (2011): 213–222.

³¹ G. Rae, “Back to the Future: The Resurgence of Poland’s Conservative Right,” *Debatte: Journal of Contemporary Central and Eastern Europe* 15, 2 (2007): 221–232.

Solidarity Electoral Action, a coalition of mainstream trade unions and minor rightist parties that was founded in 1996 and won the elections of 1997, utilized this rhetoric about 1989. It contained a number of political forces whose diverse and antagonistic economic platforms were united by a pact, centered on their shared Catholicism, anti-communism, and desire to create a “broad electoral bloc, capable of winning the next parliamentary elections.” Such an alliance could complete a genuine “Solidarity revolution” based on Catholic anti-communist values, and which had failed to be fully implemented in 1989.³² For them, the institutionalized forgetting of the communist period that was symbolized by the “thick line under the past” approach of conservative Prime Minister Tadeusz Mazowiecki (1989), and then by ex-communist President Aleksander Kwaśniewski’s campaign slogan “Let’s choose the future” (1995), needed to be overturned. After its election, Solidarity Electoral Action pursued policies to tear Poland from its communist past. It initiated the first (failed) attempts at widespread screening of former security service collaborators who stood for post-socialist public office, attempted to pass a law on restitution of nationalized property (which was vetoed by the ex-communist President), and created the first new state institution since 1989—the Institute of National Remembrance—in order to reshape Polish collective memory and to encourage a judicial confrontation with the communist past.

Following another government dominated by former communists, which re-took power after 2001, the idea of 1989 as an unfinished revolution was revived again by the Law and Justice party, which later would become the dominant partner in a governing coalition from 2005 to 2007. From 2003, when in opposition, they started to argue that a supposedly immoral, corrupt, weak, and anti-national “Third Republic” be replaced with a new “Fourth Republic” based on anti-communism and a right republican (Gaullist-Pilsudskite) conception of the strong state; later they adopted political Catholicism too. Their leader, and then prime minister, Jarosław Kaczyński, emphasized that there had been no “storming of the Bastille” in 1989, and that their government would complete the revolution, by instigating widespread purges of the ex-communists, not merely from public life but also from academia or journalism.³³ Moreover, they

³² “[P]olitical groups, social groups, and people, for whom truth, justice and interpersonal solidarity are the indispensable elements in building an independent, just, and democratic Poland,” taken from *Solidarity Electoral Action Declaration*, June 8, 1996.

³³ J. Kaczyński, “Democrats cannot be tolerant to Communism,” speech at the Institute of National Memory, February 21, 2007.

also criticized the *Laissez-faire* economic transformations of the early 1990s, arguing that their former (liberal) colleagues in Solidarity had struck a deal with the Communists in 1989 which sought to create a neo-liberal economic system that betrayed the social justice aspects of their former movement. Rather, they advocated a strong protective national welfare state; this explained why many working-class members of Solidarity went on to support the Kaczyńskis' Law and Justice party in 2005.

1989 was also demonized for its deleterious economic and social consequences: the loss of social rights and benefits, high unemployment, growing economic disparities, and the collapse of socialist-era industry were channeled by these parties into an attack on the changes of 1989 themselves, which they represented as a betrayal of working people. In Poland, such a critique came from both wings of the political spectrum. On one side, some rightist populist politicians such as Andrzej Lepper of Self-defense (*Samobrona*) argued that the neo-liberals, such as Leszek Balcerowicz or Janusz Lewandowski, had betrayed workers by transferring state property to western capital or former communist *nomenklatura*.³⁴ On the other side, a new generation of "post-Solidarity" "new left" intellectuals—who were socially marginal but politically influential—argued that one-time socialist dissidents such as Adam Michnik betrayed the ideas of Solidarity through their alliance with new neo-liberals as they became part of the new economic elite of the post-socialist republic.

A similar position was taken in Germany by *Die Linke*, the successor to the Party of Democratic Socialism, itself the successor to the communist-era Socialist Unity Party of Germany. It played on notions of western "colonization," highlighting the loss of social rights and benefits for East Germans, and converted disillusionment over high unemployment and social unrest into election successes, gaining first or second place in all eastern *Länder* in the regional and national elections of 2009.³⁵ Yet rather than rejecting all celebration of 1989, it argued against remembering the demonstrations of that year together with the event of German unity, seeing these as quite separate moments.³⁶ Many former civil rights

³⁴ This criticism was greatest in places such as Poland where state property was not sold off through mass (or voucher) privatization, as was the case in Czechoslovakia, where all citizens were given the opportunity to own shares in privatized companies.

³⁵ E. Jesse, "Bundestags-, Landtags- und Europawahlen in den neuen Bundesländern seit 1990," *Deutschland Archiv* 42, 6 (2009): 966.

³⁶ L. Jochimsen, "Die linke Gegenstimme zu: Erinnerungskultur und Geschichtspolitik" in *Jahrbuch für Kulturpolitik 2009, Band 9, Thema: Erinnerungskulturen und Geschichtspolitik*, ed. B. Wagner (Essen: Klartext Verlag, 2009), 89–94.

activists also objected to the conflation of their original demonstrations for a reformed socialism with the later popular demand for unification and the Deutschmark. As a result, the 10th and 20th anniversaries of 1999 and 2009 have witnessed alternative commemorative events and exhibitions, bearing provocative titles such as “The short autumn of democracy” or “1989: the unredeemed utopia?”³⁷ In a similar vein, the Robert Havemann Society³⁸ erected twenty columns in Berlin in 2009 to remember the events and locations of 1989. These do not, however, mark popular locations chosen for commemorative rituals, such as the Brandenburg Gate, but rather locations that were key to the growth of the underground movement in East Germany: for them, the protest of autumn 1989 still represented the possibility of a reformed socialist utopia that was lost in the process of capitalist colonization through national unification.³⁹ The demonstrations of 1989 also inspired a number of movements in recent years that place themselves in opposition to the western capitalist market economy. Most prominently, the tradition of “Monday demonstrations,” which began in Leipzig in 1989, was adopted as a form of protest against numerous contemporary social and economic issues, such as changes to welfare benefits or cuts in education budgets. Not only have slogans from 1989 been used at such demonstrations, but the same political jokes have even circulated, this time targeting Chancellors Schröder or Merkel rather than communist-era leaders such as Ulbricht or Honecker.⁴⁰

These interpretations also emerged within the various street demonstrations that swept through many parts of the Balkans between 2011 and 2013. In one of the largest—the Bulgarian protests in winter 2013—new movements in towns and cities across the country coalesced around the issue of the rapid rise in energy prices. Their protests eventually led to the resignation of Boyko Borisov’s center-right government, and new elections. Some observers noted that participants were not motivated by an objection to economic austerity per se, or by an anti-European Union sentiment (as elsewhere on the continent), but rather due to a specific alien-

³⁷ “Bürgerrechtler: Maueröffnung war Problem,” *Berliner Zeitung*, November 8, 1999: 26.

³⁸ Named after a chemist who became an important dissident figure, this is a society devoted to the preservation of the memory of opposition to the GDR.

³⁹ For this narrative, see also J. Mark, A. von der Goltz and A. Warring, “Reflections” in *Europe’s 1968. Voices of Revolt*, eds. R. Gildea, J. Mark and A. Warring (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 292.

⁴⁰ R. Jessen, “Die Montagsdemonstrationen” in *Erinnerungsorte der DDR*, ed. M. Sabrow (Munich: C.H. Beck, 2009): 471.

ation from the post-socialist transition.⁴¹ Unconvinced that the fall of the government they had secured was sufficient, protestors began to articulate a broader “anti-politics”, venting their frustration with the closed political and economic cartel that had been established by the 1989 settlement, and whose existence would not be challenged even by a change in democratic guard under the system’s current rules. They demanded that the election be conducted without political parties, and that all economic privatization deals since the early 1990s should be revised.⁴²

Who Celebrates 1989?

One reason for the absence of a nationally consensual version of 1989 has been the attempt of former communists to commemorate 1989, which they have done surprisingly frequently where they returned to power. However, their attempts at commemoration have frequently revealed the deep divides within the post-socialist polity, and have elicited sharp reaction, or even counter-commemorations, from the right.

SMER, (‘Direction’) was a Slovak Social Democratic Party which broke away from the Communist successor party, the Party of the Democratic Left, in 1999. It came to power in 2006 as the dominant partner in a coalition, and was in power at the moment of the 20th anniversary celebrations. Prior to 2003, SMER had in fact downplayed the memory of 1989, viewing its invocation as a stick that the right used to beat the left. Moreover, many members of the SMER elite were the children of those with important but “less visible” positions in the former communist apparatus such as diplomats, directors, and members of the secret service, who, although relatively young, had entered the Communist party in the years 1986–1988, during their university studies, as a step to boost their careers. Thus, the changes of 1989, at least for a short time, had hampered the career plans of these “leftist pragmatists” and elevated others who had participated in the revolution. This biographical explanation is used in some analyses to explain their deep-seated resentments towards the revo-

⁴¹ D. Bechev, “Bulgaria’s anger: The real source,” *Eurozine*, March 14, 2013.

⁴² For a leftist analysis, see M. Ivancheva, “Bulgarian Winter of Protests,” *Open Democracy*, March 15, 2013, <http://www.opendemocracy.net/mariya-ivancheva/bulgarian-winter-of-protests> (accessed February 18, 2014). She also highlights the evisceration of alternative political discourses in post-socialist Bulgaria to explain the absence of political program or clear political language within the movement.

lution and its protagonists.⁴³ This approach to 1989 was made plain in the person of young SMER politician (and later prime minister) Robert Fico, who was able confidently to state in an interview in 2000 that he had not noticed the transformations of 1989 at the time, because he had had a “lot of work to do.” In the years that followed, SMER increasingly acknowledged 1989 but presented it according to the understandings of their political base, “the losers of the revolution.” They realized that they could not challenge the right’s stranglehold on the memory of 1989, and thus they accused the leaders of the Revolution and former dissidents of only having pursued their own political and economic interests in 1989, which had resulted in an economically inequitable and corrupt post-socialist society. In 2003, for instance, Robert Fico stated that the “November events” of 1989 were a classic political coup, the result of long-term planning by the forces of international finance and acquiesced to by US and Soviet elites who wished to put an end to the expense of the arms race. Student and mass demonstrations had only been there to create an illusion of popular revolution.⁴⁴ Such “revisionist” interpretations were repeated during preparations for the 20th anniversary in 2009; one prominent SMER politician, the Speaker of the Parliament Pavol Paška, refuted what he saw as the uncritical commemoration of 1989 as a victory of the people: “A small group of people usurped the right to tell millions of other people how to perceive the fall of communism. They claim to have access to some ultimate truth, and the rest of us are wrong.”⁴⁵ This led to former revolutionaries and the rightist opposition boycotting official celebrations, and establishing their own counter-commemoration, arguing that the SMER-led government, consisting of former communists, had no moral authority to speak about 1989.⁴⁶ Recalling 1989 revealed the extent of political polarization.

⁴³ See for example: “Naši mladokomunisti,” *Týždeň*, November 7, 2008, <http://www.tyzden.sk/doma/nasi-mladokomunisti.html> (accessed November 15, 2011).

⁴⁴ “Fico: Komunizmus bol sociálnejší a ľudia sa mali lepšie.” *SME*, November 17, 2003, <http://www.sme.sk/c/1170133/fico-komunizmus-bol-socialnejši-a-ľudia-sa-mali-lepšie.html>, (accessed September 28, 2012).

⁴⁵ Bariak, Ladislav. “Paška: Sloboda nestačí, potrebujeme plný žalúdok.” *Aktualne.sk*, November 13, 2009, <http://aktualne.centrum.sk/domov/politika/clanek.phtml?id=1195332> (accessed September 19, 2011).

⁴⁶ Ondruš, Braňo. “Oslavy novembra: vytváranie legendy.” *Nové Slovo*, November 27, 2009, http://www.noveslovo.sk/c/10625/Oslavy_novembra__vytvaranie_legendy (accessed September 19, 2011).

In Hungary too, the attempts of former communists to control the “politics of memory” resulted in counter-protests from the right. Here, the successor party was to become the dominant force in the first two decades of post-socialist politics, winning elections in 1994, 2002, and 2006. Unlike the Slovak SMER, they were a direct descendant of the communists: the former party was never officially dissolved, and its communist-era membership and financial resources remained.⁴⁷ Moreover, they had been involved in the dismantling of the former system, and were committed to a “third way” program that supported a globalized market economy. Thus, unlike SMER, they did not contest the economic settlement of 1989 with such vehemence. Rather, they sought to use history to construct a democratic heritage for themselves, in which 1989 played a starring role. Whilst condemning dictatorship, and apologizing for their role in it, they also began to construct a story in which the left were the true harbingers of democracy: a narrative that began with their support for the Red Army’s liberation of Hungary from Fascism and the conservative, “reactionary” political system that had preceded it, and continued with their embrace of a progressive political system after 1945, which had sought to advance social equality. When that experiment degenerated into Stalinist oppression after 1948, the reformed left played a leading role in forging resistance to that dictatorship, which eventually led to the Uprising of 1956. Although their attempts to democratize Hungary—embodied in the figure of Imre Nagy—had failed, they had—in the figure of János Kádár—nevertheless sought reform within a constrained international environment, and worked to prepare the country for the eventual arrival of liberal democracy.⁴⁸ Ex-communists pointed to their role as the greatest liberalizers within the bloc, introducing market conditions and reaching out to western institutions from the late 1960s onwards. They presented the late communist period as the steady inevitable evolution from communism to social democracy in the context of the constrained geopolitical environment of the period.⁴⁹ In this version of history, Hungarian Com-

⁴⁷ The continuity in membership after 1989 was striking: Over 90% of its membership in 1991 had already been members. See A. Grzymała-Busse, *Redeeming the Communist Past: The Regeneration of Communist Successor Parties in East Central Europe After 1989* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 112.

⁴⁸ A. Mink, “The Kádár of History,” *Budapest Review of Books* 11, no. 1–4 (2001): 44–46.

⁴⁹ According to Ferenc Laczó, “[they] rely on a revised version of the convergence thesis popular in the 1960s, which presupposed the reconcilability of reform communism and social democracy.” See F. Laczó, “The Many Moralists and the Few Communists: Approaching Morality and Politics in Post-Communist Hungary” in *Past in the Making:*

munists—as soon as the rise of Gorbachev allowed it—transformed their reformist agenda into a democratic one, organizing multiparty local elections from 1984, enabling the growth of opposition movements, and transforming themselves into “Europeanized” Social Democrats in the late 1980s.⁵⁰ 1989 was thus not their defeat; rather, it was the end point of a story of their own makeover for a democratic era.

It was this manipulation of history that partly provoked the violent rightist demonstrations in Budapest that accompanied the perceived illegitimacy of the socialist government’s stewardship of the 50th anniversary of the 1956 Uprising in autumn 2006. Claiming that the socialists in power were the direct descendants of those who had suppressed the national aspirations of the Hungarian people in the destruction of the Uprising, their protest was an attack on 1989 too: a moment which was supposed to bring an end to the control of the country by the leftists had in fact witnessed the survival of those “communist oppressors” who still ran the country today.⁵¹ The symbolism of the protests often harked back to images and scripts from 1956 itself—the protestors stormed the Hungarian state TV building, in imitation of ‘56ers who had taken Hungarian Radio as one of the first acts of the revolution. Others sought to remind the government of the suppression of the 1956 revolution by Soviet tanks; they stole one from an exhibition on the Uprising and, delighted to discover that it still worked, rode it through the streets of Budapest as part of the public protests. They thus fashioned themselves as heroic revolutionaries, inspired by the struggles of 1956, whose mission it now was to bring down those socialists who had survived the failed revolutions of 1989 and still clung to power.⁵²

Historical Revisionism in Central Europe after 1989, ed. M. Kopeček (Budapest–New York: CEU Press, 2008), 159.

⁵⁰ For this argument from the first democratically-elected former communist prime minister of post-socialist Hungary, see “Miért lett pártvezér? Mezei András beszélgetése dr. Horn Gyulával I.,” *Élet és Irodalom*, May 17, 1991: 7.

⁵¹ Gyurcsány, in turn, tried to break the link that protestors made between 1956 and 2006: G. Egry, “1956 Emlékezete Itthon és külföldön,” *Regio: kisebbség, politika, társadalom* 18, no. 3 (2007): 15.

⁵² On these interpretations, see M. Mátyai and I. Kaposi, “Radicals Online: The Hungarian Street Protests of 2006 and the Internet” in *Finding the Right Place on the Map: Central and Eastern European Media Change in a Global Perspective*, eds. Jakubowicz K. and M. Sükösd (Bristol: Intellect, 2008): 289–90; A. Gyulai, “Egy Diszkurzív Stratégia Értelmében Felfogott Igazságról és Hazugságról,” *Politikatudományi Szemle* 2 (2007): 105–122; Mark, *Unfinished Revolution*, 10–12.

Likewise in Poland, some former communists—such as post-socialist President Aleksander Kwaśniewski (1995–2005)—celebrated 1989. Here too, this angered the right, and became a source of further political friction. For ex-communists who successfully remade themselves for post-socialist democracy, 1989 was presented as a moment that proved their commitment to a historic compromise and confirmed the authenticity of their democratization. They argued that the Round Table was a necessary compromise, and that its participants, including communists, were patriots. In this account, ex-communists did not need to be attacked, or a new anti-communist revolution attempted. Although individual communists had remained, they had long rejected their commitment to the previous system. The communist participants of the Round Table truly wanted to reform the system, demonstrated by the fact that they had agreed to a democratic test (Kwaśniewski claimed that this was why he proposed completely free elections to the Senate as opposed to only partly free elections to the Sejm in 1989). Thus ex-communists often regarded the past as “mastered,” rejecting the right’s questioning of 1989 as an incomplete revolution. Kwaśniewski’s successful presidential campaign in 1995 was accompanied by the slogan “Let’s choose the future,” which implied that the past had been mastered and was best left behind. Indeed, he owed his electoral success in part to his ability to frame his opponents as unable to escape from older anti-communist struggles and obsessions with 1989, to the detriment of Poland’s economic and political development. As the sociologist Andrzej Rychard put it, Kwaśniewski was “the personification of the dream about an elegant and painless departure from the communist past.”⁵³

Some of those opposition politicians who had been part of the left-wing of the Solidarity movement that had sat down with the Communist Party and negotiated the system away went further than Kwaśniewski: 1989 was not only politically useful for re-establishing their own political traditions, but had the potential to be a unifying “foundational myth” for the new democratic system as a whole. This can in part be explained by their own trajectories: Solidarity leaders such as Jacek Kuroń, Karol Modzelewski, Zbigniew Bujak, and Adam Michnik were not only participants in the Round Table agreements of 1989, but also quickly became established members of the post-socialist political establishment, exerting considerable influence on dominant media such as *Gazeta Wyborcza*, and

⁵³ Quoted in M. Subotić, “How Kwasniewski Won,” *Polish News Bulletin*, November 27, 1995.

retaining influence within governments in the years between 1989–1993, 1997–2001 and after 2007. In this context, they embraced 1989 far more unambiguously as the great victory of democratic capitalism, and viewed the whole process of political and economic transformation as a historic success. Rather than stressing the supposed unfinished nature of 1989—that the failure to exclude former high-ranking party members had enabled a crony *nomenklatura* capitalism to develop—Adam Michnik, for instance, viewed the absence of revolution, the negotiated nature of the transition, and the survival of communists into the new system, as something to be celebrated.⁵⁴ He maintained that the “negotiated” process was a symbol of the maturity and civilized nature of central European countries in which authoritarianism had been discarded without bloodshed, and had rapidly produced political systems robust enough to incorporate former communists without instability. He sought to represent the distinctly unheroic processes of the Round Table agreements not only as a victory of totalitarianism, but also as a style of civilized politics based on reconciliation that had been lost in the years since the change of system and had to be rediscovered.⁵⁵

The invocation of 1989 as a call for the return to civilized consensual politics was also a feature of Slovak politics after the break-up of Czechoslovakia, and the gaining of national independence, in 1993. With the establishment of a new country, the first post-socialist political elite were swept away and the political continuity with the Velvet revolution of November 1989 lost: no so-called “men of November [1989]” were left in important political positions. According to Peter Zajac, one of the leaders of the movement Public Against Violence (PAG), “the nation sacrificed its first post-November politicians.”⁵⁶ Although the newly dominant political figure Vladimír Mečiar had some connections with the political movements around 1989—he was already part of PAG in November 1989 and his party, Movement for Democratic Slovakia, has split from this movement—he defined himself as a critic of the revolution. Rather, Me-

⁵⁴ A. Michnik, “The Velvet Restoration” in *The Revolutions of 1989*, ed. V. Tismaneanu (London: Routledge, 1999), 239–45.

⁵⁵ Kubik and Linch, “The Original Sin of Poland’s Third Republic”; they see the divides in the Polish polity as the result of “two central cleavages [which] [...] have their origin in the unrealized ritual closure of both the Round Table negotiations” (p.17). For an academic celebration of the forms of negotiation and new political expression represented by the Round Tables, see also E. Matynia, *Performative Democracy* (Boulder: Paradigm Publishers, 2009).

⁵⁶ P. Zajac, *Sen o krajine* (Bratislava: Kalligram, 1996), 82.

čiar and his government now considered themselves as the fathers of an independent Slovak republic, and the split of Czechoslovakia in 1993 became the real “year zero.” Indeed, instead of using the term “Velvet revolution”, Mečiar supporters began to speak about the “Coups” or “events of November 17.”⁵⁷ Commemorative days connected with the creation of the new state (e.g. “Day of the Constitution”, “Day of the creation of the Slovak Republic”) and practices celebrating the “struggle for national independence” (e.g. “The Bonfires of Sovereignty”) dominated.

By contrast, the opposition, comprising mainly of the rightist parties and also some of the left, referred to the spirit of 1989 as part of its anti-government mobilization. In this sense, attitudes towards 1989 were defined not by a simple right-left division, but rather by whether one supported the populist nationalism of Mečiar’s government or not. The opposition often argued that the original ideals of the Velvet revolution—liberal democracy, integration into European and Atlantic organizations, anti-populism, anti-nationalism, and a return to the “civilized” political culture—had been devastated by the vulgarity, disdain for individual freedom, and exclusionary nationalism of Mečiar’s first Slovak government.⁵⁸ As a result, those Slovak elites who had been involved in the Velvet revolution—the so-called “men of November”—signaled their support for rightist parties, giving right-wing politicians the cover to present themselves as true heirs of the Velvet Revolution. The anti-Mečiar demonstrations of the late 1990s sought to invoke the lost ideals and rituals of 1989. The demonstrators rejected revolutionary rhetoric, advocated calm, “civilized” non-violent methods, singing the protest songs of 1989 at sites associated with that year. The rollcall of speakers at the anti-Mečiar rallies included the artists, actors, singers, intellectuals, and former leaders of the revolution. As a result, the memory of 1989 lost its chance to become a unifying memory as it started to be connected almost exclusively with the right and liberal parts of the Slovak political spectrum. Moreover, the right instrumentalized the memory of 1989 much more when they were in opposition and needed to mobilize their supporters; during the (predominantly) rightist coalitions of 1998–2006, the idea of a return to the “values of November [1989]” disappeared. This partly explained the very limited involvement of political elites in the 10th anniversary celebrations in Bratislava, which were for the most part informal, small scale, and organized by non-

⁵⁷ Ibid., 77.

⁵⁸ S. Auer, *Liberal Nationalism in Central Europe* (London: Routledge, 2004), 156.

governmental organizations.⁵⁹ Under the new Slovak state, it was rather the memory of the “anti-fascist” Slovak Uprising of 1944 which became the most unifying of national commemorations, expressing the idea that the new Slovak republic derived its democratic character through a supposed “common fight” against an outside Fascist enemy.⁶⁰

The failures to create a “1989 tradition”

In Slovakia, Poland, and Hungary, a unifying consensual 1989 tradition did not emerge in the two decades after the collapse of communism. On the twentieth anniversary, the commemorative activity that took place in the Slovak capital was divided between political factions who advocated, in small-scale ceremonies, their own interpretations of 1989. In Hungary, there was little commemorative activity at all. In Poland, in 2009, there were the first attempts at constructing a cohesive memory of 1989.⁶¹ The ruling party Civic Platform, which came to power in 2007 as a broad populist liberal party with the help of the electorate of the former communists, and the growing Polish middle class, took up the liberal and ex-communist view of 1989 as a historic breakpoint that needed to be remembered. Much effort went into a national commemoration of the first semi-free elections on June 4 in Gdańsk, the seaport where the oppositional Solidarity movement had begun. Crucially, it was the elections that were chosen as the object of commemoration rather than the still-controversial Round Tables; this choice reflected the belief that a focus on

⁵⁹ M. Tódová, “Oslavy Novembra nebudú jednotné,” *SME*, September 19, 2009.

⁶⁰ During the socialist period in Czechoslovakia, the beginning of anti-fascist Slovak National Uprising was also the most important Slovak memorial day, on August 29. The official post-socialist interpretation of the Uprising only got rid of the leading role of communists in the event, but maintained the traditional interpretation that this moment was one of the most important turning points in modern Slovak history. This was despite the reservations of certain Christian and nationalist groups which viewed this event as a reason for the destruction of the independent wartime Slovak state, and the assumption of power of the subsequent communist regime. Nevertheless, no politicians since 1945 have dared to contest its importance for fear of being branded as pro-fascist.

⁶¹ In 2001, a substantial 1131 page volume, *A Decade of an Independent Poland 1989–1999* with contributions by 369 authors, was published. It framed 1989 as a moment of national liberation, presenting itself as a parallel volume to one which had been published ten years after the establishment of an independent Poland after the First World War. See W. Kuczyński ed., *Dziesięciolecie Polski Niepodległej 1989–1999* (Warsaw: United Publishers & Productions, 2001).

a moment that represented the actuality of freedom and democracy, rather than the “messy and unsatisfactory” processes that brought Poland there, would garner greater support. Many important international dignitaries were invited. Yet what resulted revealed much more about the failures to find a consensual way to understand 1989. Due to a fear of riots, and a threat of strikes by the Solidarity trade union over the increasingly bleak future of the shipyards located in Gdańsk, Prime Minister Donald Tusk decided that these commemorations had to be moved from the Baltic port to Cracow. 1989 was, for potential protestors, a moment that represented the end to workers’ economic security. Even following this relocation, no consensual celebration emerged: 1989 was eventually commemorated in three separate events led by Donald Tusk, opposition leader Lech Kaczyński, and the Polish parliament respectively: it was still impossible for political elites to find a common national form in which to remember the collapse of communism.⁶² Poland’s commemorations failed in part because they failed to overcome the deeply divided ways in which Polish society understood the far-reaching continuities between pre- and post-1989 systems. Indeed, it should be emphasized that this division was not limited to party politics; the sociologist Mirosława Grabowska referred to it as “*the post-communist divide*”, shaping fundamental identities and convictions in Polish society too.⁶³

A Stronger National 1989 Tradition?

The only countries which saw the emergence of a stronger political will to integrate 1989 into a “positive” national tradition were Germany and the Czech Republic:⁶⁴ both staged ambitious national commemorations on the

⁶² See also J. Rupnik, “Melancolie Democratique en Europe Centre et Orientale,” 2, http://www.ceri-sciencespo.com/archive/2010/janvier/art_jr.pdf (accessed September 28, 2012). The History Meeting House in Warsaw reacted against the absence of a commemoration and organized its own public events commemorating the dates of the first free elections in 1989. The playful activities they organized—such as shooting paint at a tank—created a sense of revolutionary participation that citizens were in fact denied in 1989.

⁶³ M. Grabowska, *Podział postkomunistyczny. Społeczne podstawy polityki w Polsce po 1989 roku* (Warsaw: Scholar, 2004). This contemporary sense of continuity for some Poles is captured in the term for the post-communist Third Republic, “PRL-Bis,” which means “The People’s Republic of Poland—the continuation.”

⁶⁴ Indeed, Krapfl noted that in the Czech Republic the positive myth of the “spirit of unity, strength, and reconciliation” embodied in 1989 has survived alongside the idea of 1989 as betrayal”: Krapfl, “The Sacred and the Velvet Revolution,” 51.

20th anniversary of the revolution in 2009 that linked 1989 with traditions of national freedom and democracy dating back to the 19th century, or even earlier. The reasons for this difference lay in the degree to which 1989 could be convincingly constructed as a meaningful break with the communist past; in these countries, the first post-socialist years saw the establishment of an aggressive anti-communism in which the idea that 1989 represented a moment of revolutionary change was more broadly accepted. Second, in neither country did former apparatchiks take state power; this in turn created a space within which conservative parties, who came to be the most vocal anti-communists in the 2000s, could invoke 1989 as a decisive victory over communists.⁶⁵ Even here, it should be noted, commemorations of 1989, often led by the right, were still strongly contested both at elite and local levels.

In the Czech Republic, the intent to celebrate 1989 as an expression of a positive nationalism was, to some degree, due to the charisma and popularity of Václav Havel, the leading dissident who became the first president of post-socialist Czechoslovakia and then of the Czech Republic. He was able to tap into, and further craft, a Czech self-identity as an essentially democratic nation, promoting the idea not only that the so-called Velvet Revolution of 1989 was a tremendous victory of civic society and participatory democracy over totalitarianism, but that it was also an inevitable return to the natural instincts of the Czech people.⁶⁶ That this idea was broadly shared at least immediately after 1989 lay in the continuing power of Czechs' self-identity as a highly cultured nation whose civilization was evidenced by the continued struggle for democratic nationhood against Habsburg rule, Nazism, and then communism.⁶⁷ In this respect,

⁶⁵ Unlike Hungary and Poland, their mainstream conservative parties did not promote the idea of the revolution as incomplete.

⁶⁶ See M.E. Ducreux, "Entre catholicisme et protestantisme: l'identité tchèque," *Le Débat* 59, no. 2 (1990): 103–121.

⁶⁷ See, for example, L. Holý, *The Little Czech and the Great Czech Nation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996); M. Blaive, "La démocratie pour les Tchèques: une légitimité politique et une composante identitaire," *Revue d'études comparatives Est-Ouest* 1 (2003): 59–82; A. Orzoff, *Battle for the Castle. The Myth of Czechoslovakia in Europe 1914–1948* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009). On the other hand, there is evidence that the "little Czech man," i.e. the rank-and-file citizen, was not nearly as impressed by Havel's credentials or by the heroic dissident movement in general as the Prague elites were. For a discussion of post-1989 "heroes," see M. Blaive, "Le 'petit homme tchèque' à la mode socialiste : rupture et continuités depuis 1989" in *Le retour des héros : la reconstitution des mythologies nationales à l'heure du post-communisme*, eds. K. Amacher and L. Heller (Genève: Presses de l'Université de Genève, 2009), 91–115.

Havel's narrative served an important contemporary political purpose as it educated citizens about the role that dissidents claimed to have played as repositories of the nation's democratic traditions, as they sought to demonstrate their anti-communist credentials just before the first post-socialist elections. The new anti-communist discourse was also a sudden reversal in Havel's dominant pre-1989 concern that the nation had too easily become communist conformists.⁶⁸ His initial attempts to highlight this had raised a short-lived collective feeling of contrition, but had met with little enthusiasm after 1989—the wider public no doubt preferring to be presented as anti-communist fighters, both on the domestic scene and abroad. Thus Havel began to invoke historical figures such as the fifteenth century reformist preacher Jan Hus and Czechoslovak founding president Tomáš Masaryk as evidence of citizens' democratic values whose existence, even if they had lain dormant under the conformism of communist rule, had inevitably re-appeared in November 1989 just as they were needed. In a speech the following month, he celebrated the Velvet revolution—and its unexpected revolutionaries—as the manifestation of a predestined resurfacing of national traditions:

The students were joined by the theatre actors and then by the whole cultural scene. This was important: it helped enrich the revolution with a cultural dimension. It was a tradition in this country: for decades, indeed for centuries, culture has promoted our national identity throughout the dark ages. It is represented by names such as Jiří z Poděbrad, Komenský, Havlíček, Štúr, Masaryk, Štefánik, Patočka. With a dizzying speed, the whole nation then awoke themselves. It turned out that even though its culture, broadmindedness and humanity had long been repressed, stifled and harmed, they were never destroyed. They had merely been dozing and were awaiting their time.⁶⁹

The idea of a planned, popularly supported, heroic anti-communist revolution in 1989 became the mainstream account that was accepted by elites across the political spectrum. This is not to claim that there were no moments when the notion of an “unfinished” or “betrayed” revolution arose. Indeed, it should be noted that even Havel toyed with advocating a “second revolution”, particularly in the first post-socialist years, noting in a speech in August 1990 the need for a continued struggle against the old bureaucracy, and “hidden forms” of communism in political and social

⁶⁸ See for example his 1970s political essays, the most famous of which are his *Letter to Dr Gustáv Husák* (1975) and *Power of the Powerless* (1976).

⁶⁹ V. Havel, “Projev k občanům před volbou prezidenta republiky,” *Czechoslovak TV*, 16 December 1989, http://www.Vaclavhavel.cz/showtrans.php?cat=projevy&val=923_projevy.html&typ=HTML (accessed October 26, 2011).

structures.⁷⁰ Indeed, he returned to this theme in his last years, in his 2006 memoirs *Briefly Please*, in which he was deeply critical of the *nomenklatura* capitalism that 1989 had enabled, and called for a new generation, unencumbered by the communist past, to complete a second revolution. However, this critique never became as powerful or influential as in countries such as Hungary and Poland.⁷¹ First, those anti-communist populist rightists who did contest the settlement did not get into government, and tended to see themselves as “above politics.” Second, Havel, when faced with a radical anti-communist right who in 1991 accused him of “betraying the revolution” by allowing the then Prime Minister Marián Čalfa—a communist-era chairman of the legislative council, and then important patron of Havel’s Civic Forum—to remain in the system, he abandoned this rhetoric for as long as he was in power.⁷² Third, the opposition Communist party neither disputed the need to commemorate 1989 as a legitimate historical moment, nor was it able to return to power nationally.⁷³ Here, the Czech and Moravian Communist Party (*Komunistická strana Čech a Moravy*, KSČM) (as it became following the break-up of Czechoslovakia in 1993) did not reform itself into a market-oriented “Third Way” socialist party, as their equivalents did in many other post-socialist countries. It failed to gain national power because of the constant refusal of the Social Democratic Party (*Česká strana sociálně demokratická*, ČSSD) to form an electoral alliance with them, even though they kept polling 15% to 20% of the votes well into the 2000s, and a Social Democratic-Communist coalition would have won many elections “on paper.” Fourth, in the absence of a reformed and politically revived post-Communist party, unlike Hungary and Poland, it was much easier for mainstream anti-communist conservative historians and politicians to celebrate the victorious struggle of 1989. Unlike Havel and his Civic Platform, however, the conservatives of the Civic Democratic

⁷⁰ M. Znoj, “Václav Havel, His Idea of Civil Society and Czech Liberal Tradition,” in this volume, 129–30.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 132–33.

⁷² For the accusation, see M. Dolejší, “Analýza 17. Listopadu,” <http://www.analyza.wz.cz/> (accessed September 26, 2012).

⁷³ Czech Communists spoke little about the Velvet Revolution, but could accept 1989 as a legitimate moment in Czech history, “which would have come anyway even if the communists had stayed in power, but this would have taken much longer,” as one can read in an interview with Miroslav Štěpán, leader of the Prague Communist Party in 1989, see K. Perknerová, “Štěpán: vězení jsem si zasloužil,” *Lidové noviny*, November 9, 2009, <http://www.denik.cz/samet-rozhovory/stepan-vezeni-jsem-si-zaslouzil-neprosadil-jsem-zm.html> (accessed October 26, 2011).

party (*Občanská demokratická strana*, ODS) or the Civic Democratic Alliance (*Občanská Demokratická Aliance*, ODA) placed much more emphasis on 1989 as the victory of capitalism and the market, rather than as a triumph for civic society and participatory democracy.

In the 2000s, the dominant account of 1989 in the Czech Republic was provided by anti-communist conservatives. This historical discourse was the product of a strongly anti-communist group of historians and politicians whose major achievement was the establishment and control of the Institute for the Study of Totalitarian Regimes in 2007. Central for them was the idea of a nation brutalized by a criminal and illegal regime, that had then been heroically rescued by an anti-communist movement. In this account, the student protestors of autumn 1989 were no longer the accidental participants of a revolution which took them by surprise and which they did not purposefully initiate. Moreover, they were ascribed a determined anti-communism despite having been part of the system. Most political analysts at the time, and a few historians since, attempted to counter these “myths” by arguing that these demonstrators neither wished to destroy the system (they were in fact initially supporters commemorating the officially-sanctioned fiftieth anniversary of Jan Opletal’s execution by the Nazis) and that they played only an improvised role.⁷⁴ As historian Jiří Suk has put it, it was a “revolution without revolutionaries.”⁷⁵ Nevertheless, this focus on resistance was part of a larger movement in the 2000s to commemorate and reward resisters to the previous regime, and to define their mirror image—the “collaborator”—who would be excluded from such recognition and whose ostracization would be made to appear urgent.⁷⁶

At the 20th anniversary commemorations, the Institute for the Study of Totalitarian Regimes organized a large exhibit on Wenceslas Square,

⁷⁴ Cf. the different mythologization of protestors in eastern Germany, whose reformed socialist leanings were celebrated in order to turn their resistance into a moment when an alternative leftist utopia was still possible, prior to the ‘capitalist takeover’ that arrived with German unification.

⁷⁵ J. Suk, *Labyrintem revoluce. Aktéři, zápletky a křižovatky jedné politické krize (od listopadu 1989 do června 1990)* (Prague: Prostor, 2003), 21. The political analysts of the revolution at the time also universally noted its unexpected and improvised character. See, for instance, J. F. N. Bradley, *Czechoslovakia’s Velvet Revolution. A Political Analysis* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1992).

⁷⁶ See, for example, the law 262/2011 adopted on June 20, 2011, which provided national recognition in the form of increased pensions or medals for both peaceful and armed resisters. Betraying its origins in Czech politics, the law devotes considerable attention to defining those collaborators who are not eligible, <http://www.ustrcr.cz/data/pdf/normy/sb262-2011.pdf> (accessed October 26, 2011).

which offered a renewed interpretation of the Velvet Revolution as a fully organized and well-prepared student conspiracy which had been planned since the mid-1980s. Under the heading “They didn’t give up. Stories of the Twentieth Century”, one of the posters stated,

The student movement had gradually taken shape since the mid-1980s [...] Its task was to establish a very powerful network throughout universities. [...] an unbelievably sophisticated organization of future strike committees was created throughout the faculties. Its ability to act quickly and its professionalism surprised us. It is probably an irony of fate that the November 17 demonstration was only one of the many planned activities which we prepared together. But the other ones were swept away by the avalanche of changes that came after the police raid on the National Avenue.⁷⁷

Indeed, its effective re-politicization and capture by the right meant that the celebration of 1989 became connected with the demonization of everything about the communist period as criminal and barbarous, a tradition of official discourse particularly strong in the Czech Republic dating back to laws in 1991 and 1993, which defined the communist period as one of “non-freedom” and “illegitimacy.” The strength of this official demonization might explain the rejection of this “reductionist” narrative of the communist past in Czech society, a dislike which was, by the 2000s, increasingly transferred into an aversion towards the story of 1989 as a victory over a criminal dictatorship. In particular, local studies suggest that there was a restitution of the continuity between the pre- and the post-1989 period in popular memory, and a refutation of the elite idea that it was necessary to frame 1989 as a powerful caesura between a criminal past and a liberated present in order to be properly civilized and democratic. Rather, both the remembered contentment of the late communist era, and the mixed experiences of the post-socialist era, led many to refute these elite Prague-centred interpretations of 1989.⁷⁸ This rejection oc-

⁷⁷ See the panels of the exhibit on the USTR website and the portrait of Monika MacDonagh-Pajerová in particular: <http://www.ustrcr.cz/data/pdf/vystavy/my-to-nevzdali/demonstrace-pametnici.pdf>. (Last accessed 14 December 2014.)

⁷⁸ See the sociological micro-study of a small town, “The reconstruction of communist rule”: J. Kabele, “Late socialist and revolutionary achievements of the township of Filipov” in *Communism from the Viewpoint of Societies*, ed. M. Blaive (Prague: Ce-FReS, 2006), 101–115; M. Blaive and B. Molden, *Hranice probíhají vodním tokem. Odrasy historie ve vnímání obyvatel Gmündu a Českých Velenic* (Brno: Barrister & Principal, 2009). For examples from the former GDR and Slovakia, see E. Sheffer, *Burned Bridge. How East and West Germans Made the Iron Curtain* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011) and M. Blaive, “Identity and Ethnicity at the Slovak-Hungarian Border,” *Eruditio-Educatio* 5, no. 3–4 (2010): 125–138.

curred twice over. Not only did some of the population fail to accept the wholly negative view of communism that post-1989 democracy sought to impose through its commemoration policy, it also seemed to share little of the positive vision of “1989” that the intellectual elites tried to convey.⁷⁹ Local studies revealed that many rejected the idea that one was disavowing democracy by finding advantages in the communist period, or that it was necessary to be anti-communist to appreciate democracy. In this sense, oral history demonstrates a lack of identification with this “1989 ideology.” For this reason, 1989 was often absent in one oral history study conducted in České Velenice near the Czech-Austrian border: one lady who was interviewed could not remember what had happened in 1989 and when asked if the term “Velvet Revolution” meant anything to her, answered, “Ah yes! But that was in Prague!”⁸⁰ Interviewees in the Slovak town of Komárno, especially ethnic Hungarians, had to be repeatedly reminded about 1989: they knew of the Velvet Revolution’s existence but could not always remember in which year it took place and evidently failed to ascribe a significant meaning to it in their everyday lives.⁸¹ Surveys in Slovakia indeed suggested that the low attendance at commemorations of the Velvet Revolution was the result of not only disillusionment at the technocratic, cynical, and corrupt style of post-socialist governance, but also due to the fact that the post-1989 generation appeared to know very little about the Velvet Revolution and its leaders.⁸² For them, a commemoration on November 17th meant little or nothing at all.⁸³

⁷⁹ See Blaive, “The 1989 Revolution as a non-lieu de mémoire.” On both the fear amongst anti-communists in Romania and Poland that post-socialist populations did not share their view that 1989 should be understood as a moment of liberation from a criminal dictatorship, see Mark, *Unfinished Revolution*, 28–32.

⁸⁰ Blaive and Molden, *Hranice probíhaj vodním tokem*.

⁸¹ See Blaive, “Identity and Ethnicity at the Slovak-Hungarian Border,” and idem, “Multiple identities and Europeaness at the Czech-Austrian and Slovak-Hungarian borders,” *Eruditio-Educatio* 4, no. 2 (2009): 5–16.

⁸² “Mladí o novembri 1989 už nič nevedia,” *Pravda*, November 16, 2007. http://spravy.pravda.sk/mladi-o-novembri-1989-uz-nic-nevedia-dlf/sk_domace.asp?c=A071116_074035_sk_domace_p23 (accessed September 19, 2011).

⁸³ During the 15th anniversary in Bratislava, the official ceremony, in the presence of Prime Minister Mikuláš Dzurinda, was held in a small square and only attracted a few hundred people. Official guests expressed their disappointment, although they recognized the reasons for this: “The people have their own problems, many of them have changed their minds about 1989”; R. Filipko, “Ľudí prilákali najmä speváci,” *SME*, November 18, 2004, <http://www.sme.sk/c/1826893/ludi-prilakali-najma-spevaci.html> (accessed September 19, 2011).

As in the Czech Republic, Germany saw significant twentieth anniversary commemorations in November 2009, marking the emergence of a growing desire amongst the public to create a positive national tradition around 1989. Events were markedly different from past occasions, with large-scale celebrations and exhibitions taking place across several months. Popular engagement with the anniversary was demonstrated by the hundreds of thousands who gathered on a cold and wet evening on November 9, 2009, as well as the huge success of an open-air exhibition on Alexanderplatz, which was extended by almost eleven months due to popular demand. There were some similarities that explain the gradual construction of 1989 traditions in both countries. As in the Czech Republic, a powerful totalitarian reading of the communist past was developed from early on, in which 1989 was important as a historical marker that signaled the end point to an era of criminality. This narrative was promoted in particular by the conservative and West German elite, as well as by former members of the GDR's civil rights movement. It was significantly developed from 1992 to 1994 by the *Bundestag*'s special enquiry commission into the GDR past, which clearly highlighted the totalitarian nature of the GDR. Moreover, by using this narrative to frame and justify the democratic present, the commission worked towards establishing a "didactic public history."⁸⁴ The second parliamentary commission, from 1995–1998, ultimately continued the work of the first, serving to legitimize the contemporary status quo. As one of its main aims read: "The special enquiry commission should contribute to the consolidation of a democratic self-awareness, a sense of justice rooted in freedom and an anti-totalitarian consensus. It should also counter all tendencies towards the trivialisation and justification of dictatorships."⁸⁵ A direct outcome of the second commission was the creation of the Federal Foundation for the Reappraisal of the SED Dictatorship (*Bundesstiftung zur Aufarbeitung der SED-Diktatur*), which has received substantial financial backing to help rehabilitate former victims of the regime, and to promote research, exhibitions, events, and political education on the GDR, all of which serve to underline the democratic legitimacy of the present.

⁸⁴ M. Andrews, "Grand national narratives and the project of truth commissions: a comparative analysis," *Media, Culture & Society* 25 (2003): 51. See also: A. H. Beattie, *Playing Politics with History: The Bundestag Inquiries into East Germany* (New York and Oxford: Berghahn, 2008).

⁸⁵ Schlußbericht der Enquete-Kommission "Überwindung der Folgen der SED-Diktatur im Prozess der deutschen Einheit," June 10, 1998, *Drucksache* 13/11000, 11.

Within the legal sphere, no law exists in Germany similar to that of 1993 in the Czech Republic, which declared the illegitimacy of the former regime. However, legislation was passed in 1992 and 1994 in order to provide compensation and rehabilitation for victims of injustices committed by the SED regime, as well as the prosecution of individuals identified with such injustices, such as border guards accused of shooting to kill at the border and leading SED functionaries. Above all, the illegitimacy of the GDR regime was highlighted through the crimes and corruption of the Stasi, particularly following the Stasi Files Law of December 1991. This law not only promoted historical analysis of the organization, but also allowed individuals access to their own personal files. In more recent years, controversial and widely-reported political debates over the appropriateness of the term “illegitimate/unjust state” (*Unrechtsstaat*) for the GDR have once again highlighted questions of legitimacy. While *Die Linke* and others on the left rejected—or qualified—the term, the Christian Democrats and the majority of the center-right continue to see it as beyond question, thus maintaining a strong emphasis on totalitarian narratives. As in the Czech Republic, the very fact that former communists did not return to power at a national level has meant that the presentation of 1989 as the heroic overcoming of a totalitarian past was not disrupted for conservative politicians as it was elsewhere to the east.

Despite this reading, demands for the commemoration of 1989 in the 1990s were muted, as highlighted above. By the 2000s, however, circumstances had begun to change: divisions between east and west were slowly lessening, and German politicians could begin to see themselves as acting on behalf of a “normal” nation, not one which was constantly defined by its difficult past.⁸⁶ Here, it was mainly conservative politicians who looked to create a “positive national tradition,” partly as a counterbalance to the tradition of “negative nationalism,” in which the memory of the Holocaust dominated commemorative politics in the first post-Communist decades. This can best be illustrated by the plans for a “Monument to Freedom and Unity” in Berlin—currently to be erected by 2017. This was originally initiated in 1998, largely by members of the conservative party the Christian Democratic Union (CDU); the monument proposal was approved by the *Bundestag* in 2007 under Merkel’s chancellorship. The ensuing competition briefly highlighted the desire to place 1989 at the

⁸⁶ Furthermore, physical traces of the divided past were rapidly disappearing, and with few sections of the Berlin Wall remaining, concrete sites of remembrance—such as the Wall Memorial Site at Bernauer Straße—gained growing importance.

heart of a new national memory culture: the monument was to embody democratic values, and to constitute a “national symbol” and “joyous monument,” marking a move away from previous concepts of “negative nationalism.”⁸⁷ Designs were also required to demonstrate a longer national tradition of freedom, highlighting earlier revolutions (e.g. 1848 and 1918), and to draw a line of continuity between the unifications of 1871 and 1989 (highlighted above all by its proposed location on the foundations of a former imperial monument). Although the failure of the first competition resulted in a simplified second version, the desire to use 1989 in order to create a national tradition of freedom and unity, much like the French tradition of *liberté, égalité, fraternité*, was evident from the start. The leading role of the conservative CDU—arguably the political party to gain most from unification—was also significant, although most other mainstream political parties largely came to support the project.

Attempts to embed 1989 in a longer democratic tradition were also visible in the wider commemorative landscape of 2009, dubbed the “super memory year,”⁸⁸ which marked not only 20 years since 1989, but also 60 years of the Basic Law (*Grundgesetz*), 90 years of the Weimar constitution, and even 160 years of the Frankfurt constitution. The 20 and 60 year commemorations were the particular focus of this historical intertwining, with the Ministry of the Interior launching a campaign under the slogan of “Freedom, Unity, Democracy”, in which the significance of these anniversaries were linked to democratic renewal and stability in the present.⁸⁹ As in the Czech Republic in the 2000s, the locating of 1989 as part of a democratic tradition was strongly linked to stories of resistance. In a similar vein to the exhibition on Wenceslas Square in Prague, the 2009 exhibition on Alexanderplatz, for example, traced the roots of 1989 back to the history of the opposition movement in the GDR from the late 1970s and 1980s, focusing on the peace and environmental movement, as well as the role of the churches, youth subcultures, and the artistic sphere.⁹⁰ In line with

⁸⁷ See A. Saunders, “The Politics of Memory in Berlin’s *Freiheits- und Einheitsdenkmal*” in *Remembering and Rethinking the GDR: Multiple Perspectives and Plural Authenticities*, eds. A. Saunders and D. Pinfold (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013).

⁸⁸ K. Göring-Eckardt, “Für ein kritisches Geschichtsbewusstsein” in *Jahrbuch für Kulturpolitik 2009, Band 9. Thema: Erinnerungskulturen und Geschichtspolitik*, ed. B. Wagner (Essen: Klartext Verlag, 2009), 95.

⁸⁹ See http://www.freiheit-und-einheit.de/FuE/DE/Home/Startseite_node.html (accessed December 16, 2011).

⁹⁰ The exhibition was organized by the Robert Havemann Society, which promotes the history of opposition and resistance in the GDR.

this focus on active resistance, the opening text in the accompanying brochure pays tribute to the “courageous East Germans.”⁹¹ The title of the exhibition, “Peaceful Revolution 1989/90,” also reflected on-going debates over terminology since the mid-2000s. The term “peaceful revolution” was actively promoted by some historians, former activists, and center-right politicians,⁹² in an attempt to replace the widely-used term *Wende* (“turn”). In their eyes, the latter term, popularly used to refer to the changes of 1989–1990 in Germany, remained tainted by its association with the communist SED (Egon Krenz promised a *Wende* after coming to power in October 1989) and failed to highlight the active role of demonstrators. The growing predominance of the term “Peaceful Revolution” in official discourse not only highlighted the heroic role of the East German protestors, but also underlined the injustices of the GDR, and, significantly, situated 1989 in a national trajectory of historic revolutions.⁹³

Any notion of 1989 as a unifying national narrative is, however, misleading. The experience of 1989–1990 was one which is indelibly marked on the memories of East Germans, for regardless of whether one supported, tolerated, or opposed the regime, life changed beyond recognition in 1989. Many West Germans, however, observed events from afar, often only personally affected when required to pay “solidarity tax” to support the reconstruction of the east. Memories and commemorative events relating to 1989 are thus predominantly located in the east, yet official government celebrations have often seen a dominance of western speakers at such events; the *Bundestag*’s plans to remember the tenth anniversary of November 9th, for instance, received widespread criticism because not a single eastern civil rights activist was on the original list of speakers.⁹⁴ As has often been

⁹¹ “Wir sind das Volk!,” *Magazin zur Ausstellung Friedliche Revolution 1989/90* (Berlin: Kulturprojekte Berlin GmbH, 2009), 13.

⁹² The use of this term was even advised on the website of the Federal Government, at: http://www.bundesregierung.de/nm_914534/Content/DE/Artikel/20Jahre/2009-10-20-wende-oder-wie.html (accessed December 16, 2011). See also: M. Richter, “Die Wende. Plädoyer für eine umgangssprachliche Benutzung des Begriffs,” *Deutschland Archiv* 40, no. 5 (2007): 861–68; R. Eckert, “Gegen die Wende-Demagogie – für den Revolutionsbegriff,” *Deutschland Archiv* 40, no. 6 (2007): 1084; M. Richter, “Ebenfalls gegen die Wende-Demagogie und für den Revolutionsbegriff,” *Deutschland Archiv* 40, (2007): 1086–87.

⁹³ See M. Sabrow, “Wem gehört ‘1989’?” in *Bewältigte Diktaturvergangenheit? 20 Jahre DDR-Aufarbeitung*, Helmstedter Colloquien Heft 12, ed. M. Sabrow (Leipzig: Akademische Verlagsanstalt, 2010), 9–20.

⁹⁴ U. Deupmann and R. Oschlies, “Thierse verteidigt Liste der Redner für den 9. November,” *Berliner Zeitung*, November 4, 1999.

claimed of the unification process itself, memory of 1989 has, to some extent, been “colonized” by the west. Moreover, emphasis on the totalitarian paradigm has been increasingly contested in the 2000s, with the “Expert Commission” of 2005–2006, chaired by historian Martin Sabrow, recommending—amongst other things—a more serious engagement with the “everyday” experiences of the GDR. Indeed, the commission hoped that its recommendations would set “new standards for a plural and multi-perspective re-working of German history in the ‘century of extremes’.”⁹⁵

1989 as Transnational Memory

As we have seen above, multiple factors inhibited the growth of revolutionary democratic traditions incorporating 1989 within the framework of national politics. It often proved easier for elites to present 1989 to an international audience as part of national pride in their country’s contributions to European freedom and unity, or to a global struggle to overcome dictatorship, than it was to commemorate it as a domestic story of overcoming communism.⁹⁶ This was particularly the case in Germany, where the “national” narrative of 1989 was always carefully placed alongside a strong commitment to European values, largely in order to allay any fears that a unified Germany could, once again, prove too powerful. Similarly, the demise of the GDR is consistently remembered as an integral part of European developments in the late 1980s, with figures such as Gorbachev and Wałęsa playing significant symbolic roles at anniversary celebrations in Berlin.⁹⁷ Commemorations in Berlin often explored the lessons of the wall’s fall and German unification in global terms; in 2009, for example, German national experiences were linked to the on-going struggle to overcome political di-

⁹⁵ “Empfehlungen der Expertenkommission zur Schaffung eines Geschichtsverbundes ‘Aufarbeitung der SED-Diktatur,’” May 15, 2006, 21, <http://www.stiftung-aufarbeitung.de/downloads/pdf/sabrow-bericht.pdf> (accessed May 27, 2011).

⁹⁶ On 1989 reduced to a story of a victory of dictatorship in the name of freedom, in US culture, see E. Schrecker, “Introduction. Cold War Triumphalism and the Real Cold War,” and B. Cumings, “Time of Illusion: Post-Cold War Visions of the World,” in *Cold War Triumphalism. The Misuse of History After the Fall of Communism*, ed. E. Schrecker (New York and London: The New Press, 2004), 1–24, 71–99.

⁹⁷ It is noticeable that figures of central and eastern European dissidence and resistance are often co-opted into the German script which emphasizes the importance of the Berlin Wall and German unification in the story of 1989: former leader of Polish Solidarity Lech Wałęsa, “toppled” the dominoes representing the Berlin Wall in the 2009 ceremony.

vides across the world. On November 9, 1,000 polystyrene domino tiles, decorated both by German school and youth groups, and by artists and young people from “divided” places (such as South Korea, Palestine, and Cyprus) were placed along the line of the former wall and toppled over. Similarly, the 50th anniversary of the building of the Berlin Wall in 2011 was commemorated by—amongst other things—a music and dance routine which drew direct parallels with the on-going division of Korea.

There were also parallels in Poland, where, for the first fifteen years of post-communism, neither the 1989 settlement nor the opposition Solidarity movement could be commemorated consensually on the national level. The frequent accusations that the Solidarity (*Solidarność*) movement, in negotiating with the communists in 1989, had betrayed, variously, Catholic values, working class communities, and the morals of the anti-communist struggle, meant that, despite once having been the largest anti-communist opposition movement in central-eastern Europe, it was afforded no major national monument, museum, or commemoration.⁹⁸ In 2005, it finally received attention at the 25th anniversary of the first shipyard strikes, which had led to the formation of the independent trade union Solidarity, but even then it was an international affair involving thirty world leaders who celebrated its contribution to European freedom and unity rather than its significance for the collapse of communism in Poland. August 31st was soon after declared the European Day of Solidarity and Freedom. In this sense, the Polish struggle could be more easily commemorated by Poles on an international stage—as their contribution to eventual European unity—than it could as a marker of the final end to communism domestically. Yet even here the impulse to commemorate internationally—especially among right-

⁹⁸ See for example P. Machciewicz, “Polityka historyczna to nic nowego,” *Gazeta Wyborcza*, April 20, 2006: 20; B. Szacka, “Solidarity and the Martial Law in the Collective Memory of Polish History” *Polish Sociological Review* 153, no. 1 (2006). Plans to commemorate Solidarity often revealed the deep fissures in the way in which it was remembered. The commemorative events planned for 2000 were caught up with the presidential candidacy of Marian Krzaklewski, who, as a former activist, claimed the right to speak for the legacy of Solidarity. President Kwaśniewski was not invited to the commemoration, and so no heads of state took part. At first Lech Wałęsa was kept at arm’s length, too. In 2006, Wałęsa refused to attend, as it was hosted by the radically anti-communist Kaczyńskis of the Law and Justice party. There are other reasons that explain the problems of post-socialist commemoration; first, the fact that in the early 1980s Solidarity had not initially fought to end the communist system but rather to reform it led some to suggest it was an insufficiently democratic exemplar; second, its transformation into a political movement after 1989 meant that more Poles found it difficult to value its historical role free of contemporary political concerns.

wing politicians—was driven by the concern that Germany was “colonizing” the memory of global 1989, using the Berlin Wall to displace Solidarity as the predominant symbol of change. In this sense, this commemorative revival reflected both an anti-German orientation in Polish politics, and a broader sense that eastern Europeans’ experiences of suffering and resistance were considered less important in the creation of new European memories than those in Germany and Western Europe.⁹⁹ This sense of a “stolen narrative” was particularly apparent in 2009; in spite of widespread opposition to the 20th anniversary commemoration of 1989 and Solidarity at home, the Polish press and political elites were collectively outraged when the EU Commission’s official commemorative film concerning the collapse of communism failed to include the contribution of Solidarity in its narrative, and demanded—with the help of its foreign minister—immediate changes.¹⁰⁰

Polish elites also took leading roles in promoting “1989” as a source of lessons for democratic change in North Africa and the Near East. This was observable in 2003, when connections were made between the east-central European transformation and the expected collapse of dictatorship in Iraq following US-led intervention. As Mälksoo has argued, the explanation for Polish elites’ and society’s overwhelming support for U.S. intervention in Iraq lay in the sense of “moral obligation” rooted in their own history. Their assistance was understood domestically both as a show of gratitude for U.S. support during the Cold War, and as an obligation not to abandon nations to dictatorship, as they had been after the Second World War.¹⁰¹ In this context, the anticipated success of the U.S.-led invasion and the transition from dictatorship that would follow opened up a field of discussion in which memory of 1989 could be revived, and presented as relevant source of instruction for American foreign policy and

⁹⁹ This division is a manifestation of a much larger split between eastern and western European cultures of anti-dictatorial remembrance, which has most powerfully manifested itself in the sense of competitive victimhood between cultures of Holocaust and Gulag remembrance.

¹⁰⁰ See e.g. the responses in *Rzeczpospolita* and *Gazeta Wyborcza*: <http://www.rp.pl/artykul/13,307145-Poprawia-spot-o-rocznicy-upadku-komunizmu.html>; http://wyborcza.pl/1,76842,6614278,Bruksela_o_wolnosci_bez_Solidarnosci_.html (both accessed February 20, 2012). The film also used footage from demonstrations from 1993 to illustrate Martial Law of 1981.

¹⁰¹ M. Mälksoo, *The Politics of Becoming European. A study of Polish and Baltic Post-Cold War security imaginaries* (London: Routledge, 2010), 125, 128–130. She also notes that parallels between Poles’ and Iraqis’ experience of “great power imperialism” were not drawn, however.

military elites planning post-invasion political and economic reconstruction. For instance, on April 15, 2003, Leszek Balcerowicz, who had twice been Poland's deputy prime minister, and prime exponent of its shock therapy program, argued in Washington that Iraq's position was no more challenging than the situation that faced central Europe in 1989, and that central European and Baltic countries could play an important role in transmitting what they had learnt about the rapid privatization that would likely follow the invasion.¹⁰²

This interest was revived during the so-called "Arab Awakening" from 2008 onwards.¹⁰³ Although unifying commemorations twenty years after state socialism's fall were impossible at home, foreign policy and economic elites began to "market" a positive experience of revolution abroad.¹⁰⁴ Polish Foreign Minister Radosław Sikorski and Lech Wałęsa travelled with Polish political scientists to Tunisia in May 2011—to pass on the benefits of their experience of rapid political transformation.¹⁰⁵ Drawing on the interpretation advanced by Michnik and others in the 1990s that *peaceful, civilized* and *negotiated* nature of the east-central European transition was its key legacy, Wałęsa argued against large-scale purging, and advocated the preservation of expertise from previous regime.¹⁰⁶ As holder of the EU presidency in the second half of 2011, Poland led initiatives for the promotion of international support for democratization in North Africa and the Near East (the EU's so-called "southern

¹⁰² <http://www.aei.org/events/2003/04/15/economic-shock-therapy--a-prescription-for-the-middle-east/> (accessed April 27, 2013).

¹⁰³ Alongside these attempts by public figures to understand the links between political change in eastern Europe in 1989, and in the Arab World from 2008, a considerable number of intellectuals began considering the revolutionary antecedents of the "Arab Awakening" too, variously comparing it to 1989, 1968, or 1848; see for example R. Springborg, "Whither the Arab Spring? 1989 or 1848?," *International Spectator*, 46 no. 3 (2011): 5–12; B.J. Falk, "Reflections on the Revolutions in Europe. Lessons for the Middle East and the Arab Spring" in *Samizdat, Tamizdat, and Beyond. Transnational Media During and After Socialism*, eds. Friederike Kind-Kovács and Jessie Labov (Oxford and New York: Berghahn, 2013), 281–315.

¹⁰⁴ See for example the conference in Tallinn directed at Arab reformers held in 2011: G. Jones and G. Baczyńska, "Solidarity in the Arab Spring," *Reuters* (June 2011). See also the conference held at the Central European University, Budapest, June 2011.

¹⁰⁵ See Sikorski's speech, reproduced at: <http://www.ms.gov.pl/resource/c1c9996e-d2a6-4735-8854-23ec579faab9:JCR> (accessed April 27, 2013).

¹⁰⁶ Bulgarian elites also organized conferences to transfer their experience of transformation, offering specific help with drafting of constitutions and establishment of new political parties. Jones and Baczyńska, "Solidarity."

neighborhood”).¹⁰⁷ Indeed, Sikorski became the first foreign minister from the developed world to visit rebel-held Benghazi in Libya. Cultural projects emerged too; Paul Wilson, translator of many of Vaclav Havel’s writings into English, linked up with activists in Cairo and assisted the process of translating his work into Arabic.¹⁰⁸

1989 as a Local and “Glocal” tradition

1989 was also powerfully commemorated at the sub-national level: cities which played significant roles as incubators of revolution—such as Leipzig, Plauen, Gdańsk, Košice, or Timișoara—shaped the story of that year into an important resource for local identity. In some cases, these places have sought to contest their capital city’s control over history. This is particularly the case in Košice, Slovakia’s second city, which has repeatedly challenged the right of Bratislava to control the memory of the revolution. Indeed, in 1989 itself, activists in eastern Slovakia were offended by the action of students from Bratislava, who had “paternalistically” mobilized to awaken them, having been unaware both of the mass anti-communist rallies which had already been in full swing for two weeks there, and the fact that eastern Slovakian anti-communist activists who identified themselves with the Civic Forum (CF) in Prague had already started to create its own local branches in Banská Bystrica and Košice¹⁰⁹ prior to the establishment of Bratislava’s “Public Against Violence” movement.¹¹⁰ Indeed, the resentment at this seeming condescension was further stoked in the mid-1990s when activists in Košice were forced to renounce their own revolutionary organizations and join the “Public Against Violence” movement centered in Bratislava. The so-called “unique status” of this east Slovak city, and its independent path during 1989, were still very visibly accentuated by former activists during the local commemorative celebrations in the second decade after the collapse. Reacting against an official, capital-centered account, which stressed the “Public Against Vio-

¹⁰⁷ See the Report of Poland’s EU presidency, http://pl2011.eu/sites/default/files/users/shared/spotkania_i_wydarzenia/raportue_eng_final.pdf (accessed April 27, 2013).

¹⁰⁸ Personal correspondence with Paul Wilson. Thanks to Barbara Falk for this lead.

¹⁰⁹ J. Krapfl, *Revolúcia s ľudskou tvárou, Politika, kultúra a spoločensť v Československu po 17. novembri 1989* (Bratislava: Kalligram, 2009), 152.

¹¹⁰ “Košice nie sú Bratislava,” video interview, *Týždeň*, September 14, 2009. <http://www.tyzden.sk/tyzden-kauzy/november-1989/cast/16-zmena-pri-kormidle.html> (accessed September 19, 2011).

lence” movement in Bratislava as the dominant organization in 1989, the 20th anniversary of the revolution saw no invitations to former activists from the capital: the commemoration in Košice was rather used to emphasize the autonomous development of their own revolutionary moment in 1989 which owed much more to their contacts with Prague than those in Bratislava.

Local and regional memories of 1989 also gained increasing visibility in Germany. These emerged primarily in response to two trends: first, the growing dominance of Berlin in national commemorations, and second the widespread media emphasis on the fall of the Berlin Wall as the key moment of 1989. The town of Leipzig has largely been at the forefront of promoting a regional interpretation of 1989, for it was here that 70,000 demonstrators amassed on October 9, 1989, despite widespread fears that the “Chinese solution”—i.e. a repression similar to that which Tiananmen Square student protestors faced a few months earlier—might be implemented. Concluding peacefully, this day was followed by ever growing weekly “Monday demonstrations” in Leipzig and elsewhere.¹¹¹ As such, Leipzig has been increasingly celebrated—and indeed marketed—as the birthplace of the “peaceful revolution”, with its 2009 “Festival of Lights” attracting more than 100,000 people.¹¹² The anniversary celebrations witnessed a full range of exhibitions, concerts, and discussions, as well as the unveiling of a second monument to 1989 in the town. Proposals for a larger, national monument to the demonstrations in Leipzig were also pursued as an offshoot of the monument in Berlin, and—although put on ice at the time of writing—demonstrated the growing desire in Leipzig to lay claim to its role in recent history, and to move away from memory based around Berlin and the fall of the Wall.¹¹³

A number of other eastern German regional towns have, however, also laid claim to their role in 1989, with a spate of local monuments being erected during the second decade after unification. Dessau, for instance, inaugurated a “peace bell” (2002), Magdeburg a “citizens” monument’ (2003), Halle a commemorative walkway (2006) and Plauen a “*Wende* monument” (2010). All these projects were initiated by individuals or

¹¹¹ See, for example, E. Kuhn, *Der Tag der Entscheidung. Leipzig, 9. Oktober 1989* (Berlin: Ullstein, 1992); speech given by Wolfgang Thierse on October 9, 2004 in the Nikolai-kirche <http://www.thierse.de/reden-und-texte/reden/rede-leipziger-nikolaikirche-2004/> (accessed September 10, 2011).

¹¹² Stadt Leipzig, “Lichtfest Aufbruch Leipzig.” (2009), <http://www.leipzig.de/de/buerger/politik/herbst89/2009/lichtfest/> (accessed September 10, 2011).

¹¹³ E. Finger, “Welche war die Heldenstadt?,” *Die Zeit*, September 17, 2010.

groups who were active in 1989, many of whom had strong connections to the conservative Christian Democrats. In contrast to Berlin, however, the vast majority of such projects have been wholly or partly funded by popular donations, demonstrating widespread local support. In Plauen, the monument design was chosen by popular vote. Many in this town, the often forgotten location of the first genuinely mass demonstration on October 7th, saw the twentieth anniversary as an opportunity to reclaim this past. Interestingly, its initiators also took pride in the fact that they completed their project well ahead of the central Berlin monument project.

The global and local were in some places combined. Provincial towns and cities commemorated 1989 “glocally,” in a form that connected their own local contributions in 1989 to a broader story of a world moving towards unity, the overcoming of political division, and human rights, in a manner that avoided the national debate altogether. It is perhaps indicative that the one major institution founded to commemorate the role of Solidarity in the collapse of communism in Poland was founded outside the capital (in Gdańsk, the Baltic Sea port where the movement began), and was funded not by the Polish state but rather through a partnership between the locality and the European Union in the wake of Poland’s accession to the European Union (2004). Moreover, it was established as a museum that could link the local with the international: over thirty world leaders and ex-leaders signed the document to confirm the founding of the center, which was to be called the European Solidarity Centre, and would celebrate Poland’s contribution to the continent’s march towards liberty.¹¹⁴ In a further confirmation of this Europeanized history, the poles bearing the flags of the ten new members of the European Union were commissioned to be crafted by Gdańsk shipyard workers, and installed outside the European parliament in Strasbourg on May 3, 2004. In Germany too, localities’ attempts to resist the dominance of Berlin often result in the emphasis on international—or universal—values, rather than the national project of 1989–1990. Local monument projects, for example, seek to celebrate values such as civil courage, freedom, democracy, and non-violence above and beyond national ideals; in Dessau, the “peace bell” has even become a common meeting point for peaceful demonstra-

¹¹⁴ The construction of the center was budgeted at 260 million zlotys; 25-30% of this had to come from the city of Gdańsk. On the difficulty of establishing national museums or monuments devoted to the communist past in Poland, see I. Main, “How is communism displayed? Exhibitions and museums of communism in Poland” in *Past for the Eyes*, eds. Apor and Sarkisova, 371–399.

tions in response to world events, such as the Iraq War. Similarly in Leipzig, the “Peaceful Revolution Foundation” promotes peace, anti-racism, social engagement, emancipation, and civil rights, all encapsulated under four slogans from 1989. In this way, regional projects adopt somewhat of a “glocal” texture, bringing together international and regional narratives against a more distant national background.

Conclusion

Whereas 1989 has become a powerful signifier globally for the defeat of communism and the ever-spreading reach of liberal democracy, in the region where the collapse of dictatorship took place the meaning of the events of that year came to be interpreted in far more ambiguous ways. Certainly, the role of eastern European nations in defeating communism in 1989 could be commemorated as a heroic act when performed to European or international audiences; yet, at home, its message was often a source of division, or, at least, contestation. Domestically, in Hungary and Poland, where many legal and institutional continuities existed across 1989, and where communists quickly came back to power in the early 1990s, deeply divergent understandings of 1989 became an important part of the identities of the camps into which post-socialist politics and society divided. For different groupings on both the right and left, 1989 quickly became understood not as a moment of triumph but rather of betrayal, as a failed revolution that, variously, did not end communist rule sufficiently decisively, enabled a corrupt *nomenklatura* capitalism to evolve, destroyed workers’ rights, or relegated “national values” to the background of post-socialist politics. Nor was the sense of a transformational break widely shared from below: hence there was little social pressure for the symbolic construction of 1989 as a revolutionary moment. In Poland and Hungary, it was for the most part liberal and former communist elites who sought to commemorate the end of dictatorship—some wished to highlight their commitment to reconciliation or to the new political system, or to demonstrate how rapidly accommodated themselves to the values and practices of market democracy.

Such debates played less of a role in Germany and the Czech Republic, where, as the result of both a more aggressive and earlier anti-communism and the exclusion of former communists from state power, such a feeling of continuity with the pre-1989 era did not dominate political discourse to the same extent. Here conservatives and liberals promoted 1989 as a

meaningful break with the past and started to construct powerful “positive” national traditions based around 1989 that celebrated freedom and the nation. This does not mean these new historical narratives went uncontested, however; for others in these countries, the rhetoric of heroic 1989 appeared to be an exclusionary triumphalism that stifled other memories of communism and its collapse. Some on the left argued that 1989 was a form of western colonization, or expressed their resentment that post-socialist culture required them to celebrate 1989 uncritically as a journey from darkness to light in order to be considered truly democratic. Yet others tried to escape the political polarization of these debates at a national level, finding ways to commemorate their own contributions to freedom in their own localities. Very often, they linked the revolutionary achievement of their hometowns to broader global messages of human rights, peace, and the tearing down of divisions which, for them, offered powerful positive messages borne from their experiences, which national politics could not accommodate.

A Fate for a Nation

*Concepts of History and the Nation in Hungarian Politics, 1989–2010**

GÁBOR EGRY

The problem of reconstruction of national history and the re-emergence of nations (more precisely the sudden visibility of nationalism from without) in East Central Europe after the change of regime is far from being a novel topic of scholarship. Neither of these processes was unintelligible given that the previous regimes were founded on a special form of historical interpretation and their ideology emphasized its distinctiveness from the so-called bourgeois nationalism in the form of internationalism. It would be an exaggeration to claim that Hungary was (and is) a special case at least concerning the struggle over the content of these concepts.¹ Nevertheless, the story of the more than two decades after 1989 in this country can be enlightening at least in two senses. Firstly, it shows how, in a certain context, differing and diverging concepts of history can be mingled with the opposing concepts of the nation and serve as constituent elements of the latter while the political forces struggle over the definition of the polity. Secondly, it can illustrate how history and nation, merged into the respective discourse, can be used as an ideological basis and guideline of policies far beyond the construction of memory.²

* I'm grateful for Michal Kopeček's editorial remarks that helped me to clarify my argumentation.

¹ From the recent literature James Mark's book analyzes Polish, Hungarian, Czech, Romanian and Baltic cases, while the volume edited by Michal Kopeček gives a selection of case studies, see J. Mark, *The Unfinished Revolution. Making Sense of the Communist Past in Central-Eastern Europe* (New Haven and London: Yale UP, 2010) and M. Kopeček, ed., *Past in the Making: Historical Revisionism in Central Europe after 1989* (Budapest–New York: CEU Press, 2008).

² There is an intriguing third aspect as well, the Hungarian case offers a wide range of examples how politics is transformed when its actors accept interpretations of the social sciences about their own activity and acts reflecting the presumed nature and outcome of their action. See the excellent example offered by liberal politician Iván Pető in the debate over a bill on the „Day of the Republic,” who denied the necessity of commemorat-

Hungary's political scene was for many years dominated by references to the non-national (or even anti-national) nature of the political organizations positioned on the left of the spectrum, while politicians from these organizations frequently claimed that they were, in fact, building a new community of conscientious citizens, a true Republic. The "Nation" was viewed as the only possible political community of every Hungarian wherever he lived, bound together not only by certain cultural characteristics and affinities and/or linguistic commonalities, but by forces of natural law: Hungary was seen as the nation state of all Hungarians. This policy was framed by the idea of reparation of old evils, a restitution of lost natural rights of co-nationals to be citizens of their own ethnicity-defined nation state and politics was conceived as the means to realize it, to regenerate the nation and ensure its existence in the most authentic form. Meanwhile promoters of a Republic argued that the better future of Hungary would not be dependent on its relation to non-citizen Hungarians (even if the country did have some obligations in this regard), but on how its present citizens realized that only conscious civic action and political engagement based on rational decisions would lead to necessary institutional and social changes in order to realize prosperity and welfare. The present and its challenges should be faced and dealt with, together as citizens of a common republic, but based on responsibility and the rationally accepted duty of individuals. The impact of these opposing concepts was lasting enough to offer a basis for the movement's successful organization of demonstrations in the name of the (lost) Republic against the rightist government of Viktor Orbán and the changes it implemented after 2010, under the label of the System of National Cooperation

Nationalism has been a strong political and ideological current in Hungary since the nineteenth century, while republicanism has much weaker roots in the country. Still, after 1989 these two concepts became the focus of opposing concepts of the community for equally strong political movements, separating political forces with a deep dividing line. Even if they were applied to the present they did not lack references to history. Quite the contrary, with time these concepts turned out to be intertwined with two opposing and mutually exclusive readings of Hungary's twentieth century past, thus neatly fitting the general pattern of the importance

ing the Republic because commemoration is only a social construct, thus, lacking any real emotional attachment, see Z. G. Szűcs "Napok romjai: diszkurzív politikatudományi esettanulmány a "Köz társaság Napjáról," *Politikatudományi Szemle*, 19, 4 (2010): 109–130.

of the politics of history (an attempt to create a consensual past as a basis for the community's unity) and of the politics of memory (promoting a specific interpretation of history in society) after the change of regime in East Central Europe. In this paper, I hope to outline the roots of the respective interpretations of history, how these concepts evolved after 1989 and their significance for the constructs of the community offered by the political actors.

Focusing on how history and nation were merged into a coherent vision of the community and how this could serve as a basis for far-reaching policies beyond the sphere of symbolic politics allows for a rather heterodox approach to the issue concerned. The more plausible way to address the problem would be to follow the developments in a chronological order, focusing on the transformation around 1989–1990, and draw the conclusions with regard to the present-day situation. However, the developments since 2010, revealing the intention of the political Right to reorganize the community according to their vision of authentic existence, offer another possibility: making the latest developments a starting point and putting them in a context of the last two decades. Although it gives in the main a similar coverage of the events, the thesis will be somewhat different: what happens today in Hungary in terms of restructuring of the country on almost every level is the result of highly ideology driven politics, its intention is to re-establish the nation in its most “authentic” form of existence. It is not just camouflage (although for some political actors it serves that way in practice), nor simple populism, but rather a now rare occurrence of the committed politics of national rejuvenation, quite widespread in the 1930s.³

Is there something specific in this regard in Hungary? Facing the country's past after 1989 was widespread activity in East Central Europe. The past was seen as something to deal with, and as James Mark concludes, post-communism implied a reworking and re-mythologizing of it. It happened to be a highly politicized activity and revealed deep divisions in the respective societies.⁴ But the politics of memory was a significant problem far beyond the geographical confines of the post-communist world.⁵ After WWII especially, the memory of the Holocaust became a

³ Probably it is not just pure coincidence that the German reception of Fidesz is full of references to the party's resemblance of *völkisch*, fundamentalist nationalist etc. political forces. However, practical constraints of the transition contributed to this outcome, as well.

⁴ Mark, *Unfinished Revolution*, 215–216.

⁵ H. Uhl, “Culture, Politics, Palimpsest: Theses on Memory and Society,” In *European Memory? Contested Histories and Politics of Remembrance*, ed. M. Pakier and B. Strath (New York: Berghahn Books, 2010), 80–81.

crucial, in many senses also politically constitutive—determining the identity of the polities—subject in Western Europe. However, after the change of regime the memory of communism turned out to be at least as or even more significant a problem for the transition states, a topic much less crucial in Western Europe.⁶ On the Eastern side of the emerging divide of memory in Europe, Hungary is somewhat an outsider, firstly because it has retained a sizeable Jewish community that was neither eradicated nor emigrated, making the Holocaust a living memory for many, just like communism. Secondly, its pre-communist past was initially seen as less appealing to juxtapose with communism as the positive period of national history in the twentieth century than it was in the case of some of its regional peers. Interwar Hungary was neither democratic with a consciously developed image of an ever-democratic nation like Czechoslovakia,⁷ nor enlarged after WWI like Romania, and its independence was regained at the cost of huge territorial losses inflicted upon it by the Peace Treaty of Trianon that was mourned rather than cheered in the coming decades. These factors certainly contributed to the emergence of an unusually strong anti-nationalist political current that was capable of attracting mass support.

However, taking into account the forms of the struggle over memory or the constructs of history that emerged since 1989, similarities with other countries of the region prevail. One can easily identify on the Hungarian scene the currents of the politics of memory familiar from other case studies: the radical, nationalist elites, who not only presented the past as a story of victims and perpetrators, but also sought to frame post-1989 politics as an anti-communist struggle; the more moderate, liberal anti-communists, who would have favored a proper process of “*Vergangenheitsbewältigung*,” admitting past sins and mistakes, taking responsibility for complicity with regimes of oppression (and sometimes criminal ones) in order to construct a unifying memory on the basis of lessons of history, thought as indispensable for the good functioning of democracy; the post-communists, who rewrote their own history as a story of progressivism in order to integrate it into a history written in a democratic spirit.⁸ It is also not a novelty that these currents became associated with different offers of

⁶ T. Judt, “From the House of the Dead. An Essay on Modern European Memory” in *Postwar. A History of Europe since 1945* (New York: Penguin, 2005), 803–831.

⁷ For this myth see A. Orzoff, *Battle for the Castle. The Myth of Czechoslovakia in Europe 1914–1948* (New York, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009).

⁸ Mark, *Unfinished Revolution*, 216–220.

identity and understandings of the polity. Social memory is assumed as an expression of group self-understanding through highlighting and obliterating certain elements of its past. Thus, a specific history can be assigned to a specific identity.⁹

But instead of still being the main protagonists of an ongoing and unfinished struggle even today, these triadic currents slowly merged into the two opposing readings of Hungary's recent past (since 1918) that were identified with opposing concepts of the polity. Liberal anti-communists were dissolved in the political discourse of the "Republic," while the few center-right personalities, who wished to see the emergence of a unifying memory,¹⁰ disappeared from the political scene. The recent project of the new constitution, after the demise of the political left was clearly an attempt based on an ethnic communitarian constitutionalism,¹¹ in many aspects contradicting the values represented by this center-right group.

The significant part of works dealing with the politics of history and the politics of memory for a community as large as the nation is devoted to the constructs itself and directly or indirectly to those who construct it: intellectuals, politicians, historians—in other words, the elites. These elites are inevitably actors not only in the field of politics of history and politics of memory, but also in the field of politics of identity. National history deals with the common past of distinct groups and portrays it as formative to the group's character. Hence, history as a construct and narrative aims to contribute to group identity while it situates the group and its members in the world. It distinguishes it from other groups with their own histories, but also relates it to them. History is a way—although not necessarily the only way—to construct a group. However, history is a field for contestation too. As far as it expresses a group's distinctive character and offers it an identity, a new history—emerging from contestation—could have an impact on these aspects too. As long as people accept the identity inherent in historical narratives, it is possible for social actors—among them political actors too—to exert an influence on how they understand themselves. Here lies the potential for the politics of history and the politics of memory. But history can offer distinctions not only

⁹ Uhl, „Culture, Politics, Palimpsest,” 80–81.

¹⁰ Most notably the former president of the republic, László Sólyom, see G. Egry, “A politika emlékezik – emlékezetpolitikai változatok,” *Regio* 18, 3 (2007): 3–21.

¹¹ For this concept see: P. Blokker, “Democratic Ethics, Constitutional Dimensions and ‘Constitutionalisms’” in *Central and Eastern Europe After Transition: Towards a New Socio-legal Semantics*, ed. A. Febbrajo and W. Sadurski (London: Ashgate, 2010), 84–87.

outwardly but inwardly too. Narratives can confer legitimacy on present actors portraying them as heirs to, or even direct descendants of, positive traditions and national virtues. Alternatively history can depict certain social actions or behavior, certain value systems, certain lifestyles, and ideas as negative and contrary to the group's character. If people adhere to these narratives it also lends them a strong legitimizing force. Actors representing perceived positive parts of a group's traditions are entitled to represent it, while in the case of others this right can be easily questioned. The politics of memory and the politics of history are inevitably part of this process.

I won't deviate from this practice of focusing on elites and their discourses in this study, but it is still worth noting that a different approach is also possible. Maria Bucur analyzed, in the case of Romania, the way local actors engaged with the remembrance of dead veterans, and thus the remembrance of the war itself was able to negotiate the politics of commemoration developed on a higher level and put forward as the proper form of national memory.¹² Her work is an important caveat that even the most elaborate and most visible centralized politics of memory has only a limited effect on individuals and consequently on individual identity.

The Significance of History

A tight relationship between history and the idea of the nation is not specific to Hungary. The former has many uses and functions in society, more specifically in politics. It offers an extension of the community back in time, a retroactive dimension of existence that is usually seen as pointing from the past to the present. Furthermore, it can even make the community a-temporal, as is the case with essentialist, especially with *völkisch*, concepts of the nation.¹³ History can legitimize or delegitimize nations as the once popular idea of historical nations and nations without history exemplifies.¹⁴ Moreover, history can be an argument backing claims that certain territories

¹² M. Bucur, *Heroes and Victims. War and Remembrance in twentieth Century Romania* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2009).

¹³ See M. Hettling, "Volk und Volksgeschichte in Europa" in *Volksgeschichten in Europa der Zwischenkriegszeit*, ed. M. Hettling (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2003), 7–37; G. Romsics, *Nép, nemzet, birodalom. A Habsburg Birodalom emlékezete a német, osztrák és magyar történetpolitikai gondolkodásban* (Budapest: Új Mandátum, 2010).

¹⁴ In order to reach back to the origins of this idea I will refer to O. Bauer, *Die Sozialdemokratie und die Nationale Frage* (Wien: 1907).

are the rightful possession of a nation or—in an even broader sense—claims for a nation state, as it is implied in the notion of nations with/without state building capacity.¹⁵ History can “teach” a nation, show its true qualities, capacities and characteristics and the rationale of its existence.¹⁶ To summarize, history can define a nation,¹⁷ even if this definition is not preordained and given. History itself offers many different interpretations outlining different communities signified as the “nation.”

In the Hungarian case around and after 1989, history gave an opportunity to redefine and rediscover a community (a polity) in opposition to the communist regime with the help of uncovering the neglected parts and the taboos.¹⁸ The destruction of the socialist states’ self-legitimizing narrative, conveying new meaning to events like 1956, unearthing buried personalities like Imre Nagy and breaching taboos like the fate of Hungarian minorities, drew the contours of a new nation with a different extent in time and space. Nevertheless, the question as to what constituted this nation within the perimeters assigned to it soon revealed a dividing line not only between the communist party and its opposition, but between various opposition formations as well. The dissident groups that soon became the Liberal party (Alliance of Free Democrats) advocated the construction of a new community from below, a mass movement built from small units of self-conscious and active people as a way of dismantling the regime, while the members of the populist circles, who founded the Hungarian Democratic Forum, sought a return to the natural state of the nation with the help of the state institutions.¹⁹ Although there

¹⁵ Again using a historical example to highlight the deep embeddedness of this discourse in tradition see the Hungarian case, most notably A. Apponyi’s famous speech at the Peace Conference, in January 1920, see M. Zeidler, *Trianon* (Budapest: Osiris, 2001), 121–127.

¹⁶ S. Makkai, “A magunk revíziója” in *Egyedül*. (Kolozsvár: Erdélyi Szépművés Céh, 1931).

¹⁷ Or as one can detect a hidden syllogism in Stefen Berger: nation is narration, history is narration, therefore history is the nation. See: S. Berger, “Introduction: Narrating the Nation. Historiography and other Genres” in *Narrating the Nation: Representations in History, Media and the Arts*, ed. S. Berger, L. Eriksonas and A. Mycock (New York: Oxford: Berghan Books, 2008), 1–18.

¹⁸ For a detailed coverage of such elements and their importance in the process of the change of regime see I. Rév, *Retroactive Justice* (Stanford, Ca.: Stanford University Press, 2005).

¹⁹ Z. Ripp, *Rendszerváltás Magyarországon 1987-1990* (Budapest: Napvilág Kiadó 2006), 49–51, 53–55. Paul Blokker argues that the Hungarian dissidents promoted views of a society that included republican values, see P. Blokker “Dissidence, Republicanism and Democratic Change,” *Eastern European Politics and Societies* 25, 2 (2011): 13–15.

was a consensus regarding the necessity to break with the communist distortion of the past and a refurbishment of the historical consciousness of the community, agreement was hardly reached beyond this point. Quite the contrary, different concepts of the nation soon became entangled with different views of history.²⁰ As a result the opposing political forces that engaged in deepening conflict soon after formation of József Antall's government increasingly relied on their different interpretations of the country's past as a way of drawing a dividing line between themselves. Furthermore, their differing ideas of the nation were bound to their different views of history.

Not that it would have been unprecedented. To the contrary, these interpretations borrowed extensively from the discourses of their supposed forebears from the first few decades of the century. Furthermore, there was a deeply rooted tradition of defining the nation through its history, originating from the nineteenth century, in a sense followed even by the communists. The historicist understanding of the nation was so strong that only a handful of the adepts of the *völkisch* ideas in the 1930s were ready to abandon it entirely.²¹ Its impact on the communists was also measurable; they adhered to and transformed its so-called pro-independence (*függetlenségi*) tradition into their own vision of the national past, including its most notable events and crucial moments.²² For example, they staged a grandiose commemoration of the hundredth anniversary of the revolution of 1848. However, they were also capable of fusing it with elements of the populist interpretations of the past, like the importance of the elevation of oppressed classes or figures from the populist pantheon, for example György Dózsa, the leader of a peasant uprising in 1514, who was tortured and executed.²³

While the conservative and conservative-liberal form of historicism was sidelined for a while, the populists' ideas were amalgamated with the communist historical vision. Just about the same happened to progressivist

²⁰ It is a bit simplistic to speak of two opposing interpretations of the country's history, but as concepts of the middle, like József Antall's were soon sidelined I won't deal with them here. For Antall's interpretation of historical continuity that included contested periods like 1945-1946 see Z. G. Szűcs, "<<Históriai jogalapra helyezkedtünk>>: Diszkurzív politológiai esettanulmány az 1946: I törvény szerepéről az 1989-90-es köztársasági elnöki vitában," *Politikatudományi Szemle* 17 4 (2008): 35-53.

²¹ See Romsics Gergely, *Nép, nemzet*, 279-297.

²² See M. Mevius, *Agents of Moscow: The Hungarian Communist Party and the Origins of Socialist Patriotism* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2005).

²³ For the populist view of the past see: Romsics Gergely, *Nép, nemzet*.

tradition, although in this case the tradition itself was rather abused and distorted. However, in the case of the latter, the dissident groups took the burden of rediscovery and reinterpretation, inventing their own traditions.²⁴ Not that they would have been alone; after the strict implementation of an increasingly internationalist and anti-nationalist historical narrative, the conflict between pro-independence historians and those who sought to interpret Hungary's history through modernization resurfaced. A series of debates on the nation and nationalism in historiography in the 1960s and 1970s signaled that the problem was far from being resolved. Historians, like Péter Hanák, engaged in a project of interpreting Hungary's past in the frame of supranational units, like the Habsburg Monarchy or in the context of macro-regions, like East Central Europe. The former was especially a challenge to the traditional pro-independence narrative, but it had its interwar precedents in the concept of Gyula Szekfű's conservative views. Surprisingly, the latter showed some affinity for the populist tradition, too, that emphasized the common fate of small nations between Germany and the various regimes on Russian soil. In the end, the official and tolerated interpretations of history during the late Communist regime were flexible enough to integrate most of the historiographical traditions from the interwar era and thus their survival was possible.

Despite the use of traditional historical interpretations by the communist regime, their construct was peculiar enough to give way to serious political challenge in the form of historical revision around 1989. Most notably the legacy of the revolution of 1956 offered an opportunity to delegitimize the regime, and at the end it really contributed to the demise of the system. The new Hungary needed a new, "true" history, without obfuscations and taboos, reflecting the "true" story of the nation.

Visions of a Century

But why read the century in opposing ways? The idea of breaking with the previous regime through a different history didn't make it necessary to attribute opposing readings to the recent past. One version would have sufficed as a means to deconstruct and delegitimize the regime. The fact

²⁴ The most notable example is Oszkár Jászi, whose figure inspired even the new generation, forming Fidesz, while his life was thoroughly studied by György Litván. One can also mention in this sense Miklós Szabó, who devoted his life to the analysis of the intellectual currents of early twentieth century Hungary.

that in 1989–1990 almost the whole century (especially the period starting with 1918) laid within personal and family memories certainly contributed to the lack of a coherent collective memory,²⁵ especially given the nature of the century with its frequent transformations and changes of regime which used history as a means to express the break with the past and delegitimize its predecessor.²⁶ One shall also take into account the breach in the Hungarian culture of history (*Geschichtskultur*), the fading of traditional concepts and rituals during and after state socialism.²⁷ Furthermore, one can presume that just as Maria Bucur proved in the case of Romania, personal and family memories could have been strong enough to serve as a counter-memory to the official and state-mandated memories. The dissolution of an integrative framework, both in terms of its canonic content and personal, individual attitudes towards history, gave way to competing interpretations. However, it is worth noting that concerning the period before 1918, the traditional concepts remained more or less intact, offering a common—sometimes normative²⁸—framework of interpretation, even if it seemed that individual engagement in and enthusiasm for commemorative rituals remained subdued, signaling a loosened binding force.²⁹

The case of the twentieth century was different in many aspects. With the recurring rejection of preceding regimes and their historical interpretations—just as happened in 1989—the past remained open to interpretation, while enough ideological and historiographical traditions survived, all of which – populist, historicist interpretations, progressivism – offered possible readings. The result is illustrated with depictions of the Hungarian anti-communist uprising in 1956, symbol for protest. Despite its significance acknowledged by almost everyone, a common and canonic interpretation of the revolution was never achieved, as László Sólyom rightfully

²⁵ For a challenging view of the concept of collective memory with regards to a similar twentieth century case see Bucur, “Heroes and Victims,” 9–12.

²⁶ J. László, “Történelem, elbeszélés, identitás” *Magyar Tudomány* 1 (2003), www.matud.iif.hu/03jan/laszlo2.html (accessed February 18, 2014).

²⁷ Á. von Klimó, *Nation, Konfession, Geschichte. Zur nationalen Geschichtskultur Ungarns im europäischen Kontext (1860-1948)* (München: Oldenbourg Verlag 2003), 404–406.

²⁸ For the possible normativity accompanied with a certain freedom for difference see Szűcs, “Napok romjai.”

²⁹ Nevertheless, some observers portrayed the culture of national festivities as very practical, lacking serious emotional commitment even in the thirties. Hungarian National Archives (MOL) P 1077 13, vol. 103–106.

complained at the fiftieth anniversary.³⁰ The lack of a universally accepted narrative, the existence of the above mentioned traditions and the common aim at redefining the community/polity (a means of breaking away from the *ancien régime*) resulted in the parallel and simultaneous invention of tradition and nation. The different concepts of the nation were represented by the different groups of the opposition and these groups adhered to different partial traditions. Thus, they tried to reformulate the past according to their concept of the community/polity and it was almost natural to instrumentalize these differences in the political struggle as well.³¹

There is another important element connecting the concept of history to the concept of the nation. The start of the twentieth century witnessed the dissolution of the traditional Hungarian state, the nation living in it, and the appearance of minority communities cut off from the remaining body of the nation state. From this angle the challenge was (and remained) to cope with the new situation. The traditional narrative that was strongly historicist and bound to the history of the state could not include the minority Hungarians after 1918. But as the writing of this time was based on historicism and the state, the new minority communities were excluded from the nation. Although the communist regime was able to suppress this tension, it gained renewed and additional significance when the issue of Hungarian minorities turned out to be another important topic of the process of the change of regime—for example with the first mass demonstration against Ceaușescu's systematization project in June 1988. When new Prime Minister József Antall announced that he would be the spiritual prime minister of 15 million Hungarians, it was clear that the break with the past implied a new relationship of the state with the Hungarian minorities.

Seen from the perspective of the present, as is my intention, two distinct and fairly distinguishable concepts are at the fore. However, the spectrum of concepts of history was initially more fragmented. József Antall stood for an interpretation that incorporated the aftermath of WWII as a legitimate national history,³² but this view has at the moment very

³⁰ Egry, "A politika emlékezik."

³¹ For the different uses of history see: K.G. Karlsson, "The Uses of History and the Third Wave of Europeanization" in *European Memory?*, ed. Pakier and Strath, 38–55; notable case studies on the Hungarian one are A. Pribersky, "The Fight for the National Legacy Becomes a Fight for Political Legitimacy: Hungary 2006 as a (Central) European Example," *Politická Misao* 45, 5 (2008): 219–234; A. Rajacic, "Populist Construction of Past and Future: Emotional Campaigning in Hungary Between 2002 and 2006," *East European Politics and Societies* 21, 4 (2007): 639–660.

³² See Szűcs, "Históriai jögalapra helyezkedünk."

few adherents.³³ The socialists were divided over important issues, like the nature of 1956 or their attitude towards Imre Nagy and János Kádár. While it was overcome for a while on the level of identity politics, on the political level they never succeeded in formulating a coherent historical vision of their own. Instead, they were soon absorbed by the one proposed by their liberal allies. Fidesz moved from the center-left to the right, abandoning its position of being outside the conflict over history in favor of wholeheartedly representing a markedly rightist, anti-liberal interpretation of the past. The first legislative period was especially significant in this process, the opposition putting pressure on the government accusing it of restoration of the Horthy-era. The internally divided government shifted gradually to the right, as is expressed in József Antall's changing evaluation of Miklós Horthy. Hungary's controversial Regent between 1919 and 1944, started his rule with the White Terror and ended with the Holocaust and an Arrow Cross coup d'état he—although unwillingly—legalized, but for almost two decades his prime ministers ensured stability and consolidation in the country ravaged by the aftermath of WWI.³⁴ In 1990–1991 Antall refrained from a strong emotional identification with the regent, while in 1993 he interpreted his person and his era more generously, suggesting emotional acceptance as well.

The process of the merger of these currents accelerated around 2000 and between 2004 and 2010, during the struggle of the “Republic” and the “Nation” politics of memory was based on a simple binary opposition. The former was represented by Ferenc Gyurcsány, the champion of the latter was Viktor Orbán, whose duel seemed to last until 2010, when Orbán and with him the “Nation” prevailed. It is worth noting that neither one of these concepts was a simple label used as a means of communication, but instead represented two almost ideal-typical, but honestly meant concepts of the polity. Both of these had (and has) its separate history as well.

The key problems of the reinterpretation of the history or the invention of a tradition for a period lacking it were the revolution in 1956, the dismemberment of Hungary after WWI, and the fate of the country after WWII. 1956 was the beginning of a new era, the moment that had shaken the Kádár-regime and forced it to reject its earlier interpretation of a counter-revolution. It was quite obvious that 1956 united the regime's op-

³³ One of them is probably János Horváth, Fidesz MP, see Szűcs, “Napok romjai.”

³⁴ For Antall's changing attitude see Z. O. Szóts, “A rendszerváltás nyomtatott sajtója és Horthy Miklós újratemetése,” *Múltunk* 2 (2011): 206–238.

position and deprived the party from the remnants of its legitimacy.³⁵ However, beyond these very simple points there was not much commonality in the views of the revolution. Although it was usually seen as anti-communist and anti-Soviet, the nature of the events, the driving forces, the popular desires of the revolutionaries remained contested.³⁶ The most characteristic vision of 1956 crystallized at the right, emphasizing the national character—embodied in the fight for independence—and tacitly suggesting a civic/bourgeois nature of the revolution. Its opposite relied on the notion that the revolution did not aim at returning to a capitalist system, its main ideological content was similar to third-way socialist solutions. For the socialists, a party too much contaminated by its ties to the Kádár-regime the latter, a leftist 1956, offered a chance of identification. Furthermore, with Imre Nagy as the symbolic figure and martyr they could even have found an initially uncontested, leftist predecessor. Nevertheless, in spite of Ferenc Gyurcsány's effort to make Imre Nagy a key figure in the socialist interpretation of the past, their confusion was never really resolved. The liberals were in a comfortable situation as the almost literary heirs of the revolution (the ones who—as dissidents—took care of its memory), and they equally rejected the leftist and rightist visions. However, with the political developments, the significance of the dividing line with the socialists gradually abated.

The next crucial issue, the dismemberment of Hungary at the end of WWI, involved the same differences in a different form, but the problem of the minority Hungarians added a layer of complexity. The left-right divide emerged in the form of the contested problems of the responsibility for the dissolution of Hungary and the most suitable way to deal with the traumatic (or neurotic) social-psychological consequences.³⁷ It was all the more im-

³⁵ Rév, *Retroactive Justice*.

³⁶ F. Laczó, „The Many Moralists and the Few Communists” in *Past in the Making*, ed. Kopeček, 145–169, and A. Mink, “The Revisions of the 1956 Hungarian Revolution,” *ibidem*, 169–178.

³⁷ Recently there was a debate on the present day social psychological impact of the Trianon treaty. See E. Kovács *Jeder Nachkrieg ist ein Vorkrieg – Trianon traumatikus emlékezetéről*. ÉS, 2010/39. http://www.es.hu/2010-09-30_jeder-nachkrieg-ist-ein-vorkrieg, Ungváry Krisztián: *A meg nem értett Trianon*. 2010/49. http://www.es.hu/2010-12-08_a-meg-nem-ertett-trianon, Kovács Éva: *Csak azért is: neurózis*. 2011/4. http://www.es.hu/2011-01-26_csak-azert-is-neurozis, Ungváry Krisztián: *Egy hitelrontás ellenében*. 2011/10. http://www.es.hu/2011-03-10_egy-hitelrontas-elleneben; Kovács Éva: *Az a konok okság*. ÉS, 2011/12. http://www.es.hu/2011-03-23_az-a-konok-oksag; Tamás Pál: *A Trianon-vitához*. ÉS, 2011/17. http://www.es.hu/tamas_pal;a_trianon-vitahoz;2011-04-27.html; A summary of the debate, Éva Kovács's initial

portant, as according to the traditional, historicist understanding of Hungarian history, the end of WWI was the end of the existence of the true nation state that was replaced only with a rump, partial version of it. In this sense, responsibility for this development sorted out social groups or individuals as enemies or true members of the community. After a period when the collapse of the country was attributed to the oppressive politics of the “ruling classes,” a counter-narrative was formulated on the right (or better revived from its grave), putting the lion’s share of responsibility on the “perfidious” minorities, on the lost war and reanimating the once popular myth of the left’s treachery—especially Mihály Károlyi’s. (Károlyi was a leading politician of the opposition in the dualist parliament, who emerged as prime minister and later president of the republic in 1918–1919. The same year he emigrated only to return for a brief period between 1945 and 1949 when he emigrated again. During his first exile he was trialed at home and condemned for treachery, and he became strongly sympathetic toward communists.) The opposite interpretation emphasized the sociological factors—first of all the failed nationality politics of the dualist era—behind the collapse and pointed a finger at the Hungarian elite. Based on the progressivist tradition they did not see the bourgeois and national revolution of 1918 as an attempt determined to fail and stressed the significance of the external factors in this outcome.

The cures offered for the so-called “trauma of Trianon” were more or less in line with these interpretations.³⁸ Leftist parties tended to focus on the historical nature of the events, emphasized the importance of drawing the right conclusions and learning the lessons, while in their view the solution to the problems of the Hungarian minorities lay in a pragmatic, present-oriented action, dissected from historical grievances. Their opponents were convinced that Trianon was still traumatic and it should somehow be repaired. For a while Fidesz represented a third option, accepting the traumatic nature of the past even for the present but proposing a historical understanding as a means of overcoming it.³⁹ However, today its remnants are rather rhetorical elements in their discourse.

article and Krisztián Ungváry’s response in English translation can be found at the website of the Imre Kertész Kolleg. <http://www.imre-kertesz-kolleg.uni-jena.de/index.php?id=213> (all accessed July 31, 2012.)

³⁸ G. Romsics, “Trianon a Házban. A Trianon-fogalom megjelenései és funkciói a pátok diskurzusaiban az első három parlamenti ciklus idején (1990–2002)” in *Az emlékezet konstrukciói*, ed. G. Czoch and C. Fedinec (Budapest: Teleki László Alapítvány, 2006), 35–52.

³⁹ *Ibid.*

The most controversial issue was the interpretation of the end of WWII. It was hard to assess uniformly the somewhat chaotic period, when the country was a theater of war, under German and Soviet occupation, with two governments (the Hungarian nazi Arrow Cross in the West and the Provisory National Government of leftist and agrarian parties in the East) neither installed constitutionally. Furthermore, it was an era of deliberate dissociation from the previous regime and with it from interwar Hungary's traditional social and political world, causing trouble for those seeking a coherent vision of the past. Although in the early 1990s many politicians with personal experiences of this period were active—resulting in the more nuanced interpretations mentioned above—at the end again two opposing views crystallized. For the right it was the end of Hungary, an era of foreign occupation, without real legitimacy and a period of communist plotting that subverted the nation's explicit rejection of the Communist and the Soviet. It was the beginning of a detour, a derailment of the nation from its natural track that should be ended. On the left it was seen as a democratic attempt that was diverted by mainly external factors, but something that represented the genuine will of the nation. Among liberals it was rather seen suspiciously, besides the democratic attempt its constraints were always emphasized. Nevertheless, especially because of István Bibó's (one of the most significant social-liberal political thinkers of the twentieth century and an eminent figure of the opposition to the Kádár-regime) engagement in the period, it was not denied being a part of legitimate national history.

These key points of the historical timeline were connected by overarching interpretations of the twentieth century, which were aimed at conveying legitimacy to one's own political organization and sometimes to deny it from others. In many senses age-old stereotypes and stigmata were revived (like the left's role in the collapse of Hungary) and the contestants borrowed heavily from earlier historical narratives. The evaluation of 1945 turned out to be the most crucial issue. Its rejection on the right as part of legitimate national history (i. e. as a period when the nation's will was more or less expressed without restrictions) and its moderate or more enthusiastic acceptance on the left dissected the twentieth century without any overlap of the opposite narratives. (1956 remained too contested and too diverse to have a real unifying effect on the narratives.) The right rejects the idea of accepting the history of the country between 1945 and 1990 as legitimate. Meanwhile, their opponents are at least ready to treat it as an era the consequences of which could not be sidelined in the politics

and in policies. The new country has to use it as a starting point, even if it aims at changing it.

The rightist interpretation is perfectly represented in the House of Terror and with the passing of Hungary's new constitution it gained legal significance.⁴⁰ The preamble, the so-called "National Creed" echoes this view as the "constitutional" interpretation of history⁴¹ and the significance of this historical narrative for the concept of the community is also revealed by the government's intention to reconstruct the main square around the building of the Parliament as it was in 1944.⁴²

"Republic" and "Nation"

How are these historical interpretations connected to concepts of the nation? Here I will only point out three aspects of the problem. Firstly, certain interpretations conveyed legitimacy to certain political actors, according to the forebears they selected for themselves.⁴³ In their final form, the exclusive narratives of the twentieth century were able to deprive either the left or the right of its place in the nation. As long as their predecessors acted against the interests of the nation (or even worse weren't part of the national history) their present-day representatives were heavily disadvantaged. It was no novelty, and delegitimization through history was a frequent practice between the world wars and was part of the communists' political-ideological equipment. However, neither of these periods can be seen as an era of perfect democratic polity, something Hungary claimed to be in the last two and a half decades.

Secondly, history could have served the unification of the nation or hindered it. One of the main differences of the twentieth century to the earlier period is the divided state of the Hungarians. But the division meant the loss of a common history as well, one of the main factors of the existence of the nation. For a while the hope for territorial revision substi-

⁴⁰ Z. Frazon and Zs. K. Horváth, "A megsértett Magyarország. A Terror Háza mint tárgy-bemutató, emlékmű és politikai rítus," *Regio* 13, 4 (2002): 303–347.

⁴¹ According to Art. R. Alin. 3. of the Constitution, "the legal body of the text of the constitution should be interpreted together with the National Creed and the historical constitution."

⁴² A. Gerő, "Retrótér – A Kossuth tér átrendezéséről," *Magyar Narancs*, October 27, 2011, <http://www.mancs.hu/index.php?gcPage=/public/hirek/hir.php&id=24831> (accessed November 6, 2011).

⁴³ See Karlsson, "The Uses of History."

tuted for it, but at the end of the century it was far from being a realistic idea. Thus, the alternative was either to renounce it and as a consequence to dispose of the concept of the nation united by its history, or to find a new unified interpretation. Suffering offered the latter as the core concept of national history. According to this idea, Trianon deprived the nation of its natural way of existence and, even if only a part of it had and has to suffer from the fate of being a minority, the result is the common suffering of all Hungarians. Even if history in a historicist sense could not unite them, the more essentialist story of suffering and redemption does. It was not exactly history in a temporal sense, rather a-temporal or outside time, but ensured unity. Furthermore, it was in line with the *völkisch* concepts developed in the interwar era⁴⁴ and still alive among the populist intellectuals around the change of regime.

Thirdly, not independently from the former two aspects, history was able to support the concepts of the nature of the community as well. It was either a community of will or a community of destiny. Regarding the second aspect, the Left offered no unity in history, rather the acceptance of a separate existence. Their interpretation focused on Hungary and narrated its past, offering only secondary roles for the minorities, implying that the community is constructed through the actions of its members and its result, the events unfolding in history bound together its actors. On the opposite end the Right stuck to the idea of a unitary nation of every Hungarian, united by suffering. In this sense they renounced the active participation of community members apart from a few moments of significance conceived as the real expression of the nation's will trying to find its way back to its natural course, like the election in 2010, and they made the acceptance of this common fate the criterion of membership. While the Left offered a vision in which history itself was constructed, the Right retained the idea of a preordained destiny, the realization of the substance of the nation.

As I mentioned earlier, between 2004 and 2010 the struggle peaked in the battle between "Republic" and "Nation," two ideal-typical, sometimes caricaturist representations of the nation.⁴⁵ The former is a textbook example of a civic and predominantly constructivist approach, the latter an ethnic and mainly essentialist one. The most intriguing feature of them is how much they correspond with the criteria usually associated with these concepts in scholarly works, even if some of their practical aspects or the

⁴⁴ See Romsics, "Nép, nemzet."

⁴⁵ How much these concepts fit in to the republican and communitarian types of constitutionalism is well elaborated in Blokker, "Democratic Ethics," 84–90.

actions of their representatives sometimes resemble elements from the other. Anyway, the idea of the “Republic” presupposed, as an embodiment of a constructed nation the existence of a self-conscious membership, ready to engage in public life and participate in the definition of the common good. They must be aware of their responsibility as members of the community and act accordingly. It was definitely confined to the citizens of the country and formulated civic consciousness as a precondition of the proper working of the community. Its representatives rejected ideas like dual citizenship and offered modernization as the common goal of the community. As a result its history was not only constructed in itself, subject to permanent reinterpretation, but it incorporated the past of the community within the borders and excluded minority Hungarians from the polity, albeit acknowledging cultural affinities.

While the “Republic” was built on the notion of a difference between cultural and political, the “Nation” aimed at the realization of the authentic national existence. Its representatives claimed that every member of the nation has to be equal and they are bound together by a common substance. Their goal is given. It is the destiny of the community, defined—slightly modified compared to the traditional concept—as a central role in the Carpathian Basin and victory in the competition of East Central European nations. Its history was equally essentialist, based on the premise that the foreordained mission has to be fulfilled and the nation must return to the course of its natural history, rejecting everything resulting from the events after 1944.

Both of these concepts implied a specific and well-defined idea of the internal structure of the community. While the “Republic” was associated with classical deliberative practices, the “Nation” needed chosen people who were aware of the true nature of the community and who realized what its destiny implied, either in terms of possible and necessary action or in terms of internal organization and structure. Therefore politics was not subject to popular will. It was rather a matter of capable personalities taking action in the right direction and achieving the consent of the members. (The latter being a kind of awakening of the nation.) As a result, policies usually considered subject to a political struggle were reserved as matters of national life or death (like the tax system⁴⁶) and the issue of the

⁴⁶ Former minister of National Economy, György Matolcsy said in an interview that even though the introduction of the flat tax brings significant rise of labor costs in the case of the majority of the workforce, companies must accept this burden willingly, as this tax system is the basis of the nation’s future and, therefore, everyone has to accept this responsibility and fulfill its duty.

organization of the state gained significance as a chance to erect the structures corresponding to the nature of the community. The tax system is just one example among many others, like the reorganization of the social services according to guidelines developed by Christian-socialist and Catholic social politicians in the thirties,⁴⁷ or a new law on families, which stipulates as children's duty to learn, to conduct a healthy life, to "cooperate" with their parents and later in their life to provide them with means for their life.⁴⁸

The reorganization of the state after 2010 is not simply a practical way to ensure the dominance of one party, but the realization of the forms of existence that authentic national life required. That is why policies will be anchored to the constitution, it is the rationale behind the "National Creed," the dual citizenship—the reunification of the community that is an essentially political unit—and behind the Trianon Law.⁴⁹ What is happening today is not simply the action of politicians well aware of the chance to secure their power for decades. It is a conscious attempt to establish—after decades of subdued existence—the nation in the world in its authentic form. It is a mission above all and nothing should deter the nation's destined leaders from this challenge.

Fate or Destiny?

History, politics, identity, and nation are intricately interwoven in the case of post-1989 Hungary. In the political struggle over the shape of the new Hungary two basic concepts of the community emerged around the millennium and both of them found their own history. But the protagonists of these concepts, the "Republic" and the "Nation" not simply borrowed from history to forge their own distinct traditions inside the common national one, though neither used it as a set of references to express ties to the nation. These distinct histories offered mutually exclusive readings of a common past in order to support and partly create different communities. The politics of memory could not find a single moment as a common

⁴⁷ D. Szikra, „Produktív szociálpolitika” <http://www.szuveren.hu/tarsadalom/produktiv-szocialpolitika> (accessed November 6, 2011).

⁴⁸ “Gyermekeket vállalni öröm – itt az új családvédelmi törvény,” <http://mindennapi.hu/cikk/tarsadalom/gyermeket-vallalni-orom-itt-az-uj-csaladvedelmi-torveny/2011-10-27/9053> (accessed February 18, 2014).

⁴⁹ See G. Egrý, “Why Identity Matters? Hungary's New Law on Citizenship and the Reorganization of an Organic Nation,” *EUI Working Papers RSCAS* 75 (2010): 25–28.

tradition for adherents of both currents. Rather it deepened dividing lines. Beyond a mere legitimizing aspect, history represented the different communities too, in a sense it was their embodiment.

National history is often an extension of the existing community towards the past, in this sense also part of it, a synecdoche. But their relationship, as in the Hungarian case, is not necessarily unidirectional or even mutual. The dynamics how history influenced the nation (in the form of the concepts of it) and how the concepts of the nation influenced its own history is rather dialectical. A set of different traditions, common in their centrality around the nation state that survived the Communist period, offered surprisingly suitable twentieth century pasts. They also offered different borders for the community including or excluding certain groups and different meanings of membership and community. They were not generated by the different concepts after 1989; they were already present in the first half of the century. After the change of regime they just became more entrenched and the ties linking them turned out to be too weak to salvage the polity from bifurcation. After a few years of very intensive struggle the “Nation,” and with it the community of destiny, seemed to prevail at the election in 2010.

In a traditional interpretation and according to the self-understanding of its representatives, the community achieving the authentic form of existence has a destiny, something it has to strive for, and not a fate implying a passive stance to the world and suffering. However, if one considers the role of individuals in the community, it is hard to distinguish between fate and destiny. Even if it is claimed the community recovered its freedom of action, and it has to fulfill its destiny, destiny is too much bound to a single direction, to the only authentic way of existence and organization, depriving individuals from alternatives and meaningful choices. In this sense it doesn't really differ from the long suffering since 1918–1919 postulated by advocates of the “Nation.” The “Nation” is still passively accepting its destiny just as it took its fate rather than actively and consciously working for the fulfillment of its destiny. Nevertheless, despite the political situation, the “Republic” seems to be alive, even after the demise of its earlier advocates. In a peculiar twist the attempt to realize the “Nation” strengthened civic opposition, requesting the right to actively form an individual and common future and appealing to the “Republic.” People used to appear on the streets found in it the natural opposite of the “Nation”—and a suitable metaphor for their aims. The “Republic” is still challenging the “Nation” and claims the community its right for a destiny.

From “Husakism” to “Mečiarism”

*The National Identity-Building Discourse of the Slovak Left-wing Intellectuals in 1990s Slovakia*¹

STEVO ĐURAŠKOVIĆ

The mainstream of contemporary scholarship on 1990s Slovakia finds the main cause of the nationalist Movement for Democratic Slovakia (*Hnutie za demokratické Slovensko*, HZDS) seizure of power in the hardship of democratic transition. According to the transition theories, the hardship was caused by the turmoil of simultaneous transformation of the political, social and economic system, which in the case of Slovakia was enhanced by the state-building process.² Hence the HZDS was interpreted as the most skillful agent in exploiting the turmoil for its own political ends by offering a mixture of fervent nationalism together with advocating a slowing down especially of the market reforms.³ Subsequently, the HZDS's

¹ This chapter has been written as a scope of my work on the scientific project *Politics of National Identity and 'Historical Breaks'* (Project leader: Professor Tihomir Cipek, Faculty of Political Sciences, University of Zagreb) and financed by the Croatian Ministry of Science, Education and Sports. It represents the main findings on the Slovak case of my PhD dissertation entitled “The Politics of History in Croatia and Slovakia in the 1990s.” I am grateful to the Visegrad Fund for providing me with a PhD research fellowship in 2009/2010. I am also grateful to Professor Silvia Miháliková and Andrej Findor from Faculty of Economical and Social Sciences, as well as to Adam Hudek from Historical Institute of Slovak Academy of Science for all help provided.

² For theories of democratic transition in Central and Eastern Europe see C. Offe, “Capitalism by Democratic Design? Facing the Triple Transition in East-Central Europe,” *Social Research* 58, 4 (1991): 865–892; J. J. Linz, A. C. Stephan, *Problems of Democratic Transition and Consolidation: Southern Europe, South America, and Post-Communist Europe* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1996).

³ See for example S. Szomolányi, G. Meseznikov, eds., *The Slovak Path of Transition - to Democracy?* (Bratislava: Slovak Political Science Association, 1994); S. Szomolányi, J. A. Gould, eds., *Slovakia: Problems of Democratic Consolidation and the Struggle for the Rules of the Game* (Bratislava: Slovak Political Science Association, 1997); C. Skalník-

success was also interpreted by the charisma of its leader, Vladimír Mečiar,⁴ while the movement's national identity-building narrative was approached mostly as a pure demagogic phraseology used pragmatically to attract voters inclining to nationalism not only due to the hardship of the transition, but also due to the legacy of the Slovak national identity-building process.⁵ The history of Slovak national identity-building is interpreted to follow the ethnic non-liberal path characterized by rural traditionalism and political Catholicism accompanied by the Second World War Nazi-puppet state legacy⁶ as well as by the communist undermining of the civic society values, especially by the politics of "organized forgetting" of the Second World War Holocaust.⁷ However, Erika Harris in her writings on Slovakia emphasized Roger Brubaker's theory on the communist institutionalization of nationality and its partial enhancement via education, where subsequently the regime was legitimized by undertaking

Leff, *The Czech and Slovak Republics: Nation versus State* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1997); K. Deegan-Krause, *Elected Affinities: Democracy and Party Competition in Slovakia and the Czech Republic* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2006); S. Fisher, *Political Change in Post-Communist Slovakia and Croatia: from Nationalist to Europeanist* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006).

⁴ Deegan-Krause, *Elected Affinities*; T. Haughton, *Constraints and Opportunities of Leadership in Post-Communist Europe* (Aldershot-Burlington: Ashgate, 2005); J. Baer, "Boxing and Politics in Slovakia: 'Mečiarism' Roots, Theory, Practice," *Democratization* 8, 2 (2001): 97-116.

⁵ S. Cohen, *Politics Without a Past: the Absence of History in Postcommunist Nationalism*, (Durham: Duke University Press, 1999); M. Leško, *Mečiar a Mečiarizmus: Politik bez škrupúl', politika bez zábran* (Bratislava: VMV, 1996). The argument about a lack of ideological commitment is taken also by Sharon Fisher in the already mentioned book *Political Change*. Moreover, she labels the HZDS as "impure nationalist organization" and differentiates it from the "purer" nationalist groups on the basis that the former "used other messages in addition to nationalism to attract votes" (12). Moreover, she emphasizes that impure nationalist organization such as the HZDS "lack any ideology that fits into the traditional left-right scale" (55).

⁶ M. Kusý, "Slovak Exceptionalism" in *Mittleuropa*, ed. J. Le Rider (Zagreb: Barbat, 1998), 237-261; Baer, *Boxing and Politics*.

⁷ The Communist master narrative interpreted the Second World War as the ultimate stage of the class struggle of bourgeoisie against working class and peasantry, where fascism is interpreted as an extreme form of capitalism, while the issue of the Holocaust and especially the participation of the East European population in it was erased from the collective memory. For the communist myth on the Second World War see E. Francois, "Meistererzählungen und Dammbrüche. Der Erinnerung an den Zweiten Weltkrieg zwischen Nationalisierung und Universalisierung" in *Mythen der Nationen. 1945-Arena der Erinnerungen*, ed. M. Flacke (Berlin: Deutsches Historisches Museum, 2004), 13-28. For Slovak case, see Cohen, *Politics Without a Past*.

the rapid modernization of the country.⁸ Hence, the historical legacy approach argues that the HZDS dominance is also the outcome of the "longue durée" Slovak historical legacy as well as the outset of the processes of not coming to terms with the WWII and communist pasts. Although this approach seriously contributes to the explanation of the HZDS seizure and maintaining of power in the 1990s, it still omits the importance of the HZDS's national identity-building narrative, especially in relation to the communist one.⁹ The only exception turns out to be the writings of Gil Eyal, who showed that the peculiar politics of "preservation of the past within the present" contributed outstandingly to the HZDS 1990s' seizure of power. Eyal detected the rise of the nationalist interpretation of history in the post-1968 Normalization period, and related it to the HZDS national identity-building narrative.¹⁰ However, he didn't de-

⁸ E. Harris, *Nationalism and Democratization: Politics of Slovakia and Slovenia* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2002). For theories of the communist institutionalization of nation see R. Brubaker, *Nationalism Reframed: Nationhood and the National Question in the New Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996). The theory also emphasizes that communist collectivism, although based on the theory of socialist internationalism, nicely matched the collectivist ethnic nationalisms in Central Eastern Europe.

⁹ Here it is important to mention Vladimír Krivý's comparative study on the voting behavior of the Slovak regions in the 1990s and in the interwar period showing the overlapping of the regions dominated by the HZDS and the main interwar Slovak national-clerical party HSĽS. See V. Krivý, V. Feglová, D. Balko, eds., *Slovensko a jeho regióny: sociokultúrne súvislosti volebného správania* (Bratislava: Mědiá, 1996); also V. Krivý, "Slovakia's Regions and the Struggle for Power" in *Slovakia: Problems of Democratic Consolidation*, ed. Szomolányi and Gould, 113-129. Although Krivý gives an important insight into the continuity of elements of political culture, his results shouldn't still lead us to simple reifying measurement as explanation, the tendency which Jan-Werner Müller correctly prescribed to much of political science. See J.W. Müller, "Introduction: The Power of Memory, the Memory of Power and the Power over Memory," in: *Memory and Power in Post-War Europe: Studies in the Presence of the Past*, ed. J.W. Müller (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 2.

¹⁰ G. Eyal, *The Origins of Post-communist Elites: from Prague Spring to the Break-up of Czechoslovakia* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2003); idem, "Identity and Trauma: Two Forms of the Will to Memory," *History and Memory* 16 (2004): 1. The influence of the communist ideological and national identity-building policies on the HZDS is also elaborated by Shari Cohen in the book *Politics without a Past* however approaching it from a quite peculiar perspective. Namely, Cohen nicely tracks down the intermingling of the national issue with the communist ideology, emphasizing subsequently the gradual "nationalization" of the Slovak communists. However, she discards the theory of communist institutionalizing of nation by defining communist policies as the politics of organized forgetting molding people without any ideological dedication, without national and historical consciousness and morality, whose origins she finds in

velop the more in-depth analyses of the intellectual narratives on the nation, nor did he show the close relationship of the intellectual narratives and the HZDS ideology. Hence, following the path traced by Eyal, this paper will show how the HZDS gained power in the 1990s by the appropriation of the national identity-building discourse developed by the Slovak communist intellectuals in the post-1968 Normalization period. In this paper, I will firstly expose the pre-communist concepts of the Slovak national identity-building process and show how they were appropriated by the communist national identity-building narrative, especially in the Normalization period. Then I will outline how the communist national identity-building narrative, especially the one constructed during the Normalization period, was appropriated and subsequently developed by the HZDS. Finally, I will show how the previously mentioned national identity-building discourses enabled the HZDS to successfully delegitimize its political opponents and hence maintain power.

The Conceptualization of the Nation up to 1968

The modern Slovak national identity-building process was from its very beginning split on the two factions: Czechoslovak and Slovak. As Ľubomír Lipták stressed, the idea of Czechoslovakism was founded by the mid-nineteenth century Czech political and intellectual elites as a supporting argument of the Czech statehood claims, while the Slovaks subsequently accepted the idea as the only solution to escape Hungarian post-1867 assimilation politics and accomplish the national and state-building process.¹¹ Due to the politically and socially more advanced status of the Czech lands by comparison to Slovakia—emboldened also by the existence of the Czech historical statehood tradition by comparison to the complete lack of it in the Slovak case—the idea of ethnic, cultural and linguistic sameness of the Czechs and Slovaks was based on the perception “that Slovaks were Czechs, although less developed, that the Slovak language was a complex

the pre-communist lack of the national identity-building. Hence, in Cohen’s interpretation the HZDS 1990s dominance turns out to be a result of what she calls a ‘mass-elite’ agency without any ideological commitment continuing the politics of organized forgetting and subsequently embracing nationalist discourse just as a means of gaining power. However, it remains unclear how in the brainwashed society particular HZDS nationalist appeals could get such legitimacy, even if they are restricted only to the pure avoidance of coming to terms with (holocaust) past issues, as Cohen claims.

¹¹ Ľ. Lipták, *Slovensko v 20. storočí* (Bratislava: Kalligram, 2000), 58–62.

of the Czech dialects, and that, in fact, Slovak existence was a less developed variation of Czech existence."¹² The described complex of "Slovak inferiority" continued through the later development of the Czechoslovak idea, becoming a source of political contestations only with the constitution of Czechoslovakia as the centralist republic of the unitary Czechoslovak nation.¹³ Although bringing about outstanding institutional and social modernization of Slovakia, the regime's centralist politics hampered the further Slovak state-building process,¹⁴ hence bringing the Slovak "Czechoslovakist"—mostly followers of Tomáš G. Masaryk's political thought—into a highly ambivalent position. While trying to gradually advance the Slovak nation and state-building process, they supported the regime due to its outstanding modernization impact on Slovakia, which made them become labeled as the agents of "Prague Centralism."¹⁵

The Slovak national identity-building idea was developed against the two concurrent national identity-building processes: The Hungarian and the Czechoslovak (Czech). It was forged by so called Slovak National Awakeners in the mid-nineteenth century, basing the Slovak national idea on the fundamental concepts of antiquity and the plebeian character (so-called plebeian myth) of the Slovak nation. The former was conceptualized by the appropriation of the early medieval Great Moravian Empire exclusively to Slovaks against the concurrent conceptualization of the Great Moravia to be the first common Czech and Slovak state. The appropriation of the Great Moravian Empire was also important for the appropriation of the Saints Cyril and Methodius legacy in a way to prove the Slovak cultural superiority,¹⁶ where the subsequent millennial history of

¹² P. Příhoda, "Mutual Perception in Czech-Slovak Relationship" in *The End of Czechoslovakia*, ed. J. Musil (Budapest–New York: CEU Press, 1995), 131.

¹³ Ibidem, 128–138.

¹⁴ As Lubomír Lipták argues, there were two subsequent and mutually related problems. The first one was the "elimination of the industry" in Slovakia brought about by the free market economic system, where the much stronger Czech business destroyed the Slovak primarily craft-based industry. The second one appeared in the 1930s when the young Slovak educated strata—the offspring of 1918 on modernization process—was hampered in taking posts in the state and public administration due to the previous occupation of the posts by Czechs. L. Lipták, "Slovakia in the Twentieth Century" in *A Concise History of Slovakia*, ed. Elena Mannová (Bratislava: AEP, 2000), 248–259; see also idem, *Slovensko v 20. storočí*, 113–127.

¹⁵ Ibidem, 130–136; V. Bakoš, *Question of the Nation in Slovak Thought* (Bratislava: Veda, 1999), 86–87.

¹⁶ The St. Cyril and Methodius legacy was forged on the interpretation of these two saints to be the founders of the authentic early medieval culture representing a counterpart to

Slovaks in the frame of the Hungarian empire was interpreted as the “Dark Ages” of the “thousand year oppression” over the Slovak nation. Excluding the Slovak history from Hungarian history, the so-called National Awakeners divided subsequently the Slovak from the Hungarian national identity-building idea by forging an ethnic concept of the Slovak “plebeian nation,” defining it exclusively as the oppressed ethnic peasant community sharing customs and language.¹⁷ The above exposed narrative constituted a milestone for the further Slovak national identity-building process, reaching its peak in the politics of the Hlinka’s Slovak Peoples Party (*Hlinkova slovenská ľudová strana*, HSLS), the main Slovak nationalist party in the first half of the twentieth century led by the charismatic Catholic priest, Andrej Hlinka. As Ľubomír Lipták stressed, although the party underwent a complex development in the course of its existence, it preserved the radical rejection of both liberalism and socialism as well as rejection of non-Slovak phenomena.¹⁸

Hence, the *Ľudak*¹⁹ national identity-building narrative was founded on the appropriation of the National Awakeners’ concepts, which were subsequently upgraded by the concept of Slovaks as Catholic, rural, pious folk by contrast to the alleged Czech protestant, secular, liberal decadency.²⁰ Although rejecting the idea of a Czechoslovak nation, the HSLS advocated the Slovak autonomy in the frame of a common Czech and Slovak state. As Lipták stressed, the HSLS saw autonomy “as the most

the contemporaneous two European high cultures: the Latin and the Byzantine one. This concept was appropriated both by Slovak and Czechoslovak national ideas. See V. Turčan, “Cyril a Metod - trvalé dedičstvo” in *Mýty naše Slovenské*, ed. E. Krekovič, E. Mannová, E. Krekovičová (Bratislava: Academic Electronic Press, 2005), 36–42.

¹⁷ P. Zajac, “Memory, Forgetting and Remembering as a Problem in the Creation of the Collective Identity of the Slovak Nation” in *Collective Identities in Central Europe in Modern Times*, ed. M. Csáky, E. Mannová (Bratislava: Academic Electronic Press, 1999), 45–53; T. Pichler, “Searching for Lost Memory: On the Politics of Memory in Central Europe” Ibidem, 53–65; Idem, “Past and Present in Slovak Politics” in: *Forward to the Past: Continuity and Change in Political Development in Hungary, Austria, and the Czech and Slovak Republics*, ed. L. B. Sorensen and L. C. Eliason (Aarhus: Aarhus University Press, 1997), 207–224.

¹⁸ Ľ. Lipták, “Slovak political Parties, Societies and Political Culture up to 1914” in *Changes of Changes: Society and Politics in Slovakia in the twentieth Century* (Bratislava: AEP, 2002), 131.

¹⁹ The word used for the advocates of the HSLS ideology and the national identity-building narrative.

²⁰ Z. Suda, “Slovakia in Czech national Consciousness” in *The End of Czechoslovakia*, ed. Musil, 134–135; Lipták, *Slovensko v 20. storočí*, 136–141.

effective instrument for solving the social problems of Slovakia...It would be an effective barrier against the penetration of secularism, atheism and socialism from the western part of the state, a shield for traditional values,"²¹ at least until the very end of the state's existence. Following the 1930's erosion of liberal democracy and the concurrent rise of fascism and Nazism in Europe, the party's ideology gradually inclined more towards authoritarianism, which finally compromised further Slovak national and state-building process in the light of the Slovak Second World War Nazi puppet state governed by the HSLS.²²

However, the Slovak national- and state-building process was partly redeemed by the antifascist Slovak National Uprising (*Slovenské národné povstanie*, SNP) in August 1944, a milestone in the rise of the Slovak communists. The history of communism in Slovakia developed in the tension between the changing policy of the Comintern regarding the national question and the problem of nationalities destabilizing the inter-war Czechoslovakia. Opposing the Czechoslovakist line of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia (*Komunistická strana Československa*, KSČ) adopted in the mid-1930s, the young generation of the Slovak communists insisted on the inseparability of the national and the social question, finally obtaining room for their politics in 1939 by the foundation of the Communist Party of Slovakia (*Komunistická strana Slovenska*, KSS) following the foundation of the Slovak Nazi-puppet state. Although the party's advocacy of the politics of "Soviet Slovakia," meaning Slovakia as the unit of the USSR, switched again after 1941 to the politics of the Czechoslovak socialist federation, the party advocated the Slovak autonomous position both during the War as well as in the immediate aftermath of the War.²³ However, after the takeover of the government in 1948 the Slovak communists were forced to bow to the actual politics of the KSČ which—although defining the new Czechoslovakia as the union of the two brotherhood nations—imposed the strong centralist line following the contemporaneous Stalinist official doctrine that "in the classless communist society nations would gradually merge together." Concretely, the mentioned doctrine was based on the idea that the national question—meaning predominantly the Slovak one—would solve itself once Slovakia

²¹ Lipták, "Slovakia in the Twentieth Century," 248.

²² For the HSLS ideological development over time, see Ľ. Lipták, *Politické strany na Slovensku: 1860–1989* (Bratislava: Archa, 1992), 90–96, 109–122. See also A. Bartlová, *Andrej Hlinka* (Bratislava: Obzor, 1991).

²³ Lipták, *Slovensko v 20. storočí*, 142–154.

would reach the economic level of the Czech lands.²⁴ The primacy of the class struggle issue over the national question brought about not only the 1950s trials of the leading Slovak communists Gustáv Husák, Ladislav Novomeský, Vladimír Clementis and many others under the accusation of being agents of the Slovak “bourgeoisie nationalism,” but also the idea of gradual ethnic merging of the two nations in the spirit of the pre-war Czechoslovakism, as Ľubomír Lipták had stressed.²⁵

Hence, assuming the renewed interpretation of Great Moravia as a first Czech and Slovak common state, the whole of Slovak history was subsumed under the master narrative of the historical collaboration of Czech and Slovak oppressed classes in the social emancipation fight.²⁶ The national character of the SNP was downplayed by its interpretation as a revolutionary antifascist uprising of the Slovak working class in favor of the common Czech and Slovak socialist state, where, moreover, the role of the domestic communist party was overshadowed in favor of the leading role of the Soviet Union in the uprising. The turning point came within the softening of the regime authoritarianism following Khrushchev’s anti-Stalinist politics, which in Czechoslovakia led to a KSČ factional schism, resulting, *inter alia*, in the rehabilitation of Gustáv Husák and some other sentenced Slovak communists in 1963.²⁷ The following year Husák—now even appointed deputy prime minister—published the book *Svedectvo o Slovenskom národnom povstaní* [Testimony about the Slovak National Uprising] interpreting the SNP along a Leninist line of the inseparability of the national and social questions. Hence, the uprising was now depicted as Slovak struggle for national and social emancipation led by the Slovak communists, whose final goal was the creation of the socialist federation of Czechs and Slovaks. Although Husák appropriated the crucial leading role of the uprising for the Slovak communists, he did not openly accuse the unitarist policy on nationalities of the KSČ, and only discredited the participation of the bourgeoisie factions tied to the exiled Czechoslovak government.²⁸ Although Husák assumed the interpretation of the SNP as “...the

²⁴ J. Rychlík, “From Autonomy to Federation 1938–1968” in *The End of Czechoslovakia*, ed. Musil, 193.

²⁵ Lipták, “Slovakia in the Twentieth Century,” 285.

²⁶ A. Hudek, “Slovenská historiografa a československé dejiny v rokoch 1918–1968,” *Forum Historiae*, 1 (2007): 1, 1–14; idem, “Československé mýty o Veľkej Morave a husitoch z pohľadu slovenskej historiografie,” *Česko-slovenská historická ročenka* (2008): 41–52.

²⁷ J. Rychlík, “From Autonomy to Federation 1938–1968,” 194–196.

²⁸ A. Hudek, *Najpolitickéjšia veda: slovenská historiografia v rokoch 1948–1968* (Bratislava: Typoset Print, 2010), 200–201.

spontaneous massive action of the people in which workers, peasants, and the intelligentsia appeared as the active revolutionary creator of the history,"²⁹ he limited the Czech participation in the movement to individuals serving under the leadership of Slovak communists and subsequently recognized the participation of the parts of the Slovak Nazi puppet state apparatus in the Uprising. He criticized the role of the state functionaries only in the period after the war due to their association with the Church.³⁰

As Ľubomír Lipták claims, the rehabilitation of the SNP went hand-in-hand with the mid-1960s claims for state federalization and the subsequent democratization of the political system.³¹ However the SNP's reinterpretation opened the ground for a continued framing of history in the narrative of state-building aspirations. Ironically enough, this process of (re)nationalizing Slovak history happened during the post-1968 Normalization regime led by Gustáv Husák, which although cracking down on the Prague Spring and the democratization reforms of the Dubček government kept the 1968 federal constitution.

The "Red-Nationalist" Identity-Building Narrative 1968-1989

The Nationalization process started concurrently with the Prague Spring. In 1967-68 a group of the party's intellectuals led by outstanding Slovak writer Vladimír Mináč triggered the process of the full rehabilitation of Slovak national history.³² In his writings from the late 1960s to the early

²⁹ G. Husák, "Prechádzka dejinami" in *Konfrontácia*, ed. M. Krno and P. Števíček (Bratislava: Smena, 1968), 111.

³⁰ Ibidem, 107-135; see also Cohen, *Politics without a Past*, 100-101.

³¹ Ľ. Lipták, "Tri tradície Povstania" in *Storočie dlhšie ako sto rokov: o dejinách a historiografii* (Bratislava: Kalligram, 1999), 194.

³² Vladimír Mináč (1922-1996) became an outstanding writer in the 1950s. His contemporaneous literary work depicted the Slovak war-time and post-war social life. After taking an outstanding role in the party reformist movement in the 1960s, he was appointed member of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia in 1968-1989, and the president of Matica Slovenska, the highest Slovak cultural institution, in 1974-1990. He condemned the Velvet revolution in 1989 and finished his political career as the MP for the communist party in the Czechoslovak assembly 1990-1992. See A. Červeňák, ed., *Život a dielo Vladimíra Mináča* (Nitra-Bratislava: Spolok slovenských spisovateľov, Národné literárne centrum, 1997). Since 1992 he openly supported Vladimír Mečiar. Other prominent intellectuals gathered around Mináč, such as Roman Kaliský, Pavol Števíček, Ľuboš Jurík etc.; after being suspended in the early 1970s mostly by the late 1970s they got high cultural posts in the Nomenclature, keeping them

1970s, Mináč turned to the National Awakeners' narrative of Slovak history conceptualized as a teleological process of the Slovak plebeian nationhood and statehood fighting together and neglected the absolute validity of historical materialism in oppressed small nations' histories, adopting instead the concept of the history as a "...key, which opens the gate of nationhood, the fundamental precondition of national existence."³³ Hence, calling upon the Leninist national self-determination doctrine to emphasize the solution to the national question as the precondition for social emancipation, Mináč framed the whole of Slovak history as "the history of labor, the history of constantly interrupted, but always again victorious, labor"³⁴ striving for statehood emancipation.

Simultaneous with the mid-1960s rehabilitation of Ľudovít Štúr in Slovak historiography,³⁵ Mináč labeled the 1848-49 Slovak uprising as the spontaneous expression of the historically authentic people's striving for national emancipation. Moreover, he subsequently interpreted Štúr and the National Awakeners as representing the movement of dual national and social emancipation finally accomplished by the Slovak National Uprising.³⁶ The SNP was now interpreted as a sort of culmination of the Slovak history, that being the "fundamental movement of the nation towards its own ethnic and historical authenticity."³⁷ although it would remain connected with the Czechs in the new, federally founded Czechoslovakia. Although still assuming the communist interpretation of Tiso's fascist regime to be the product of capitalism with no support from Slovak people, the interpretation of the SNP went a step further from Husák's by stressing even the rank and file civil servants as well the "quiet citizens" role in the uprising participation.³⁸ The obvious "red-nationalist" conceptualization of the SNP as the all-embracing national uprising against fascism tended to contest the two concurrent interpretations. Besides discard-

in the 1990s as part of the HZDS establishment. See Eyal, *The Origins of Postcommunist Elites*, 120–125. See also www.osobnosti.sk; www.litcentrum.sk

³³ V. Mináč, *Dúchanie do pahrieb* (Bratislava: Smena, 1970), 10.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 17.

³⁵ Ľudovít Štúr and the Slovak national-wakening movement was for decades in the communist master narrative labeled as reactionary following Marx's interpretation of the reactionary character of the Slavic national movements during the 1848-49 revolution in the Habsburg empire. See Hudek, *Najpolitickéjšia veda*, 190–198.

³⁶ V. Mináč, "Tu žije Národ" in *Vladimír Mináč-Vybrané Spory*, ed. Pavol Števček (Bratislava: Národné literárne centrum, 1997), 75–99.

³⁷ P. Števček, "Jubilejné Otázky" in *Konfrontácia*, ed. Krno and Števček, 172.

³⁸ V. Mináč, "Povstanie" in *Vladimír Mináč-Vybrané Spory*, ed. Števček, 161–175.

ing the previous Stalinist interpretation and hence legitimizing the Slovak national state-building process, it also challenged the concurrent Slovak émigré interpretation of the Uprising as the betrayal of the Slovak independent state.³⁹

The process of the further derogation of the Czechoslovak communist master narrative took place in the late 1970s and 1980s when some Slovak historians, most notably Matúš Kučera from the philosophical faculty in Bratislava, contested the official interpretation of the Great Moravia as the first common and centralized political unit of the Czechs and Slovaks by the basic reappropriation of the pre-1945 Slovak exclusivist interpretation of the Great Moravian empire as "the first Slovak state."⁴⁰ Since the official appropriation of the L'udak narrative was not possible, Kučera inscribed it in the interpretation of the Great Moravian Empire as a dualistic state consisting of the autonomous Moravian and Slovak unit (Duchy of Nitra), thus excluding the Czechs from the "state-bearing" ethnic groups and appropriating the cultural legacy of Cyril and Methodius almost exclusively to Slovaks.⁴¹ Moreover, Kučera basically adopted Mináč's version of the plebeian myth, depicting Slovak history as the teleological preservation of the statehood and cultural heritage of Great Moravia by peasant masses through laboring up to the present days.⁴²

Subsequently, extensive archeological excavations in the 1980s under the guidance of the archeologist Dušan Čaplovič added publicity to the

³⁹ See Lipták, "Tri tradície Povstania."

⁴⁰ See Eyal, *The Origins of Postcommunist elites*, 129–130. Both Czechoslovak and Slovak myths on the Great Moravian Empire, as well on other early medieval Slavonic political units on the territory of present day Czech Republic and Slovakia were used to contest concurrent political and historiographical Hungarian claims on the territory of present day Slovakia by claiming Slovak presence on the territory of the present day Slovakia prior to the Hungarians. See Hudek, "Československé mýty o Veľkej Morave," 41–52; A, Avenarius, "Epilogue: The Basic Problem of Slovak History and Historiography," in: *A Concise History of Slovakia*, ed. Mannová, 307–314.

⁴¹ The pre-1968 communist interpretation of the Great Moravian Empire labeled it as the unit of Czechs Moravians and Slovaks making the Great-Moravian Nation, while the Great Moravia was depicted as the centralized state. Hudek, "Československé mýty o Veľkej Morave," 49–52.

⁴² Kučera's main writings exposing the depicted Slovak communist narrative on Great Moravia are *Postavy veľkomoravskej histórie* (Martin, 1986) and "Veľká Morava a začiatky našich národných dejín," *Historický časopis* 33, 2 (1985): 163–200. See also Eyal, "Identity and Trauma," 15–16. After 1989 Kučera (born 1932) entered parallel political career being during the 1990s the first minister of education in the independent Slovakia (1992–1993), and Slovak ambassador in Croatia (1993–1998). See <http://www.osobnosti.sk/index.php?os=zivotopis&ID=710> (accessed February 18, 2014).

nationalization process as a way to demonstrate the antiquity of the Slovak nation.⁴³ Čaplovič tried to prove the very close similarity of the excavated Slavonic settlements from the fifth and the sixth centuries with the one from the period of the Great Moravian empire, hence claiming “the archeological investigations of the fifth-tenth century show that the roots of the modern Slovak Nation can be traced to the early medieval Sloven (Slavonic) era, and later during the flourishing of Great Moravia.”⁴⁴ Moreover, the excavations tried to prove that the early medieval Slavonic political units—including Great Moravia—matched roughly the territory of present-day Slovakia.⁴⁵ Finally, the nationalization process turned to the filmmaking industry in 1984 by the shooting of the historical drama depicting the Great Moravian Empire as the central symbol of the Slovak statehood. However, the shooting yielded criticism from the Czech side leading to the eventual abandonment of the project in 1988.⁴⁶

Here it is important to contextualize the aforementioned narratives into the overall political processes of the Normalization period, since the relationship of the narratives and the processes had an impact on the politics in the post-1989 period. First it is important to stress the regime authoritarianism inflicted much more harm on Czech than Slovak society since the purges were on a much larger scale in the Czech Republic. Moreover, the fact that the leading posts of the regime were occupied by the Slovaks (Gustáv Husák, Vasil’ Bil’ak) subsequently intermingled with the Czech

⁴³ Archeologist Dušan Čaplovič (born 1946) from the Slovak Academy of Sciences (SAV) was political advisor of the notorious 1994–1998 HZDS minister of culture Ivan Hudec, who tried to break the independent cultural scene and subsequently imposed a hard-line nationalising cultural policy. See L. Snopko, “Kultúra,” in *Slovensko 1996: súhrnná správa o stave spoločnosti a trendoch na rok 1997*, ed. M. Bútora et al (Bratislava: Inštitút pre verejné otázky, 1997), 235–244; L. Snopko and M. Kollár, “Kultúra,” in *Slovensko 1997: súhrnná správa o stave spoločnosti a trendoch na rok 1998*, ed. M. Bútora et al (Bratislava: Inštitút pre verejné otázky, 1998), 605–617. In 2001 Čaplovič became a vice-president of the Slovak social democratic party SMER. In 2006–2010 he was the deputy prime minister of the Slovak Republic, while in 2012 Čaplovič was appointed Minister of Science and Education in the actual SMER government. See <http://www.minedu.sk/799-sk/zivotopis/> (accessed February 18, 2014).

⁴⁴ D. Čaplovič, “Historical and Habitational development Within the Carpathian Basin in the second Half of the First Millennium in the Optics of the Archeological Sources,” in *Slovaks & Magyars: Slovak-Magyar Relations in Central Europe*, ed. P. Števček (Bratislava: Ministerstvo kultúry Slovenskej republiky, 1995), 37.

⁴⁵ Ibidem, 25–40. See also Eyal, “Identity and Trauma,” 14, 39.

⁴⁶ A. Drelova, “A Making of Slovak National Ideology in the Late Socialist Czechoslovakia,” unpublished paper presented at the BASEES 2012 Annual Conference, Cambridge, 31.3-2.4.2012.

perception of economic decline brought about the widespread perception of the regime as the further expression of the Slovak non-democratic path of the national identity-building process. Simultaneously, in Slovakia the regime was perceived as the particular continuation of the “Prague Centralism” due to the 1969-70 constitutional amendments derogating the autonomy stipulated by the 1968 constitution as well as by the continuous strengthening of the party’s centralism.⁴⁷ However, in the words of Petr Pithart, the regime “[had] completed the process of modernization of society and the related homogenization of the nation” hence producing the Slovak society with “little awareness of the fundamental political crisis of the regime in 1989.”⁴⁸ Depicted conditions of the nation and state-building in Slovakia seriously determined the course of the transition, which was best witnessed by the rise and fall of the Slovak liberals in the early 1990s.

1990s: From “Husakism” to “Mečiarism”

The first post-Velvet Revolution government was executed by the broad anti-communist citizens’ movement Public against Violence (*Verejnost’ proti násiliu*, VPN), which after sharing power with the communists in the 1989-90 interim government won the first democratic elections in June 1990. Although the VPN gathered various heterogenic oppositional factions—from a group of reformed communists to various 1980s opposition, mostly ecologist, activists—the main ideologists and leaders were Slovak liberal dissidents originating from the Charter 77 circle. Hence, the VPN followed the politics of its Czech counterpart Civic Forum (*Občanské fórum*, OF) advocating the politico-economic transition towards liberal democracy, its most outstanding agenda being the politics of coming to terms with the totalitarian past. Although the Slovak liberals perceived the prior agenda as overcoming the perceived non-liberal, organic legacy of the Slovak national identity-building process,⁴⁹ the course of the aftermath of the Velvet revolution imposed the negotiations about the future constitution of the federation as the most important agenda. And although the Slovak liberals advocated the supremacy of state sovereignty in contrast to

⁴⁷ P. Pithart, “Towards a Shared Freedom, 1968–1989” in *The End of Czechoslovakia*, ed. Musil, 201–222.

⁴⁸ Ibidem, 213.

⁴⁹ Cohen, *Politics Without a Past*, 125–127.

the Czech advocacy of the strong competences of the federation they—as Ľubomír Lipták stressed—did not campaign very vigorously on that issue.⁵⁰ Simply, the Slovak liberals were much more concerned with the civic society agenda since “post-1989 efforts to revive the national issue in Slovakia were perceived by a considerable part of Slovak intellectuals as a danger of a new totalitarian regime.”⁵¹ However, the VPN’s “soft line” on constitutional politics provoked immediate counteraction by the various nationalist factions—gathered around the Slovak National party (*Slovenská národná strana*, SNS) and the national cultural association *Matica slovenská*—via several public protests making an image of the VPN as insufficiently concerned with the Slovak national question.⁵² Also, the VPN’s tactics in the hectic political atmosphere of the day to divide the society into “good citizens” and the “dark totalitarian black and red forces” just deepened the cleavages in the society.⁵³ As the liberals didn’t grasp that, the whole issue of the transition in Gil Eyal’s words turned out to be a question of symbolic relationship to the past.⁵⁴ The depicted trend brought about the ceding of VPN’s support to its coalition partner Christian Democratic Union (*Kresťanskodemokratické hnutie*, KDH) by late 1990. Led by the former Catholic dissidents, the KDH positioned itself between the VPN federalism and the far-right SNS fervent “independentism.” The latter was unacceptable simply because it was accompanied by the revisionist minimization of the Slovak WWII state fascist character, moreover labeling it as an expression of the striving Slovak statehood and hence as the predecessor of the future Slovak independent state.⁵⁵ The KDH neglected and distanced itself from the Slovak wartime legacy, at the same time presenting itself as an ideological suc-

⁵⁰ Lipták, “Slovakia in the Twentieth Century,” 299.

⁵¹ A. Findor and Z. Kusá, “Rámce Vytvárania Slovenskej Národnej Identity,” *Sociológia: Slovak Sociological Review* 6 (1999): 605.

⁵² Fisher, *Political Change*, 35.

⁵³ See J. Bunčák, V. Harmadyová, Z. Kusá, eds., *Politická zmena v spoločenskej rozprave* (Bratislava: Veda, 1996), 42–85; Cohen, *Politics Without a Past*, 134–145.

⁵⁴ Eyal, *The Origins of Postcommunist Elites*, 180–181.

⁵⁵ In general terms the fascist characteristics of the regime were prescribed to the minor radical faction, while the holocaust issue was mostly prescribed to Nazis. The state was interpreted as the savior of the Slovak nation in the war-time political context, moreover bringing contemporaneous Slovak economic and cultural flourishing. See A. Hudek, *Organizačný vývoj a inštitucionalizácia Slovenskej národnej strany 1990–2002*, unpublished MA Thesis, Department of Political Science, Faculty of Philosophy, Comenius University, Bratislava, 2002; A. Hudek, “Slovenská národná strana” in *Politické Strany ako Organizácie*, ed. M. Rybář (Bratislava: Comenius University Press, 2004), 110–126.

cessor of the inter-war HSLS before its final authoritarian turn in the late 1930s.

Moreover, the party advocated the reconstitution of the federation which would enable Slovakia to obtain autonomy, projected to transform gradually to independence coinciding with the country's joining the European Community,⁵⁶ resembling closely the HSLS 1930s Slovak statehood project. However, since in Gil Eyal's words "the critique of the federation from the position of a Catholic party (KDH) was too close, in terms of the field of historical memory, to a position vindicating the Slovak fascist state of the Second World War, to close to be able to occupy the centre of Slovak politics,"⁵⁷ it seems that the electorate wanted a different kind of "middle course politics" than offered by the KDH. Since the Slovak society profited from the Normalization both economically and in terms of national identity-building, and since both the flow of the negotiations about the constitution as well as a rapid ongoing decline of the economy caused by the opening of the market⁵⁸ threatened to jeopardize what was achieved during the Normalization, the electorate wanted what Eyal rightly labeled as "the preservation of the past within the present."

Although being a fervent advocate of the civic society politics both while serving as a minister of interior as well as prime minister in the VPN 1990 government,⁵⁹ Mečiar and his ex-communist faction could smoothly switch to "the preservation of the past within the present" politics. It was possible since he simultaneously managed to build up the image of a competent executive politician in opposition to the intellectual and contemplative VPN intellectuals, an image supported by his reputation of a firm advocate of Slovak autonomy in the ongoing constitutional negotiations.⁶⁰ Hence, the HZDS—founded in March 1991 following the

⁵⁶ V. Žák, "The Velvet Divorce- Institutional Foundation," in *The End of Czechoslovakia*, ed. Musil, 253; also Fisher, *Political Change*, 2006, 45–46. See also J. Čarnogurský, *Videné od Dunaja* (Bratislava: Kalligram, 1997).

⁵⁷ Eyal, *The Origins of Postcommunist elites*, 172.

⁵⁸ For a good summary of the 1990s decline of the economy see Lipták, "Slovakia in the Twentieth Century," 296–301.

⁵⁹ For example, in the summer of 1990 Mečiar vigorously condemned the actions to commemorate both Andrej Hlinka and Slovak Nazi-puppet state leader Jozef Tiso, and subsequently cracked down on the far-right organized mass protest in October 1990 contesting the government's intention to promulgate the "Language Law" upgrading the right of the Hungarian national minority to use its language as official. See Leško, *Mečiar a Mečiarizmus*, 38–40. For the "Language Law" issue, see *Politická zmena v spoločenskej rozprave*, ed. Bunčák, Harmadyová, and Kusá, 79–97.

⁶⁰ Žák, "The Velvet Divorce," 254–256

clash of Mečiar and his ex-communist fellows with the VPN leadership—could present itself as the savior of the nation due to the following paralysis of the constitutional negotiations as well as the peak of economic crises reached under the rump VPN (now called Civic Democratic Union — *Občianska demokratická únia*, ODU)—the KDH government led by the KDH leader Ján Čarnogurský. Mečiar contested the government's politics with the program of slowing down the market reforms accompanied by the “authentic federation” concept, meaning advocating the stipulations of the 1968 federal constitution “affirming that portion of the past when reform communism and the Slovak quest for autonomy converged,” as Eyal argues.⁶¹ Moreover, the image of Mečiar and the HZDS as martyrs for and saviors of the nation were just strengthened by his removal from the prime minister post followed by the attempt backed by the Czech politicians to discredit him via pursuing the lustration issue.⁶² However, the HZDS image of the state-founding party (*štátotvorný*) was not only a matter of the “middle course politics,” but also of the full-blown national identity-building narrative, which would be nationalist but at the same time distanced from the “dark legacy” of the Slovak fascist past. The narrative was offered by the red nationalist intellectuals from the Normalization period, who publicly launched the previously developed narrative on the nation and the national history in the period of the rise of the HZDS.

With the emergence of the clash of the Mečiar's group and the VPN leadership in late 1990 and early 1991, the intellectuals organized the “Initiative of the Sovereign Slovakia” (*Iniciatíva zvrchované Slovensko*), which undertook a huge national-identity building campaign characterized by a harsh attack on the politics of the government, but simultaneous distance from the far-right. In its few public manifestos, the Initiative exposed their national identity-building claim for the politics of the “nationalization of the state” via propagating the concept of the Slovak thousand-year-old statehood beginning with the Great-Moravian Empire and Cyril-

⁶¹ Eyal, *The Origins of Postcommunist Elites*, 173.

⁶² The lustration campaign reached its peak in 1991–1992 and was pushed firstly by the contemporaneous Czech politics of coming to terms with the past. In the midst of the clash within the VPN in early 1991 the spokesman of the Czechoslovak president Václav Havel stated, “It appears as if a new coalition is emerging in Slovakia consisting of reformed communists from 1968, contemporary communists, separatists, and people who think of the wartime Slovak state as the golden age in the history of the Slovak nation...” Michael Žantovský quoted in Eyal, *The Origins of Postcommunist elites*, 2003, 177; on the lustration see *Politická zmena v spoločenskej rozprave*, ed. Bunčák, Harmadyová, and Kusá, 132–190.

Methodius literary legacy.⁶³ Advocating the same concept of the Slovak statehood solution as Mečiar did—meaning the recognition of the republic sovereignty preceding and being over the federal—the intellectuals discarded all contemporary political parties as being too partisan to bring about the full recognition of the Slovak statehood and the nationhood in the constitutional negotiations. Instead, they invoked the necessity of the emergence of the “...movement, which connects the nation with its highest interest.”⁶⁴ The relation of the national history towards the evoked national movement embodying the nation’s highest interest was again most completely elaborated by Vladimír Mináč. Although Mináč never joined the HZDS, his narrative about the character of the nation and its history served as a yardstick for the construction of the HZDS’s national identity-building narrative.⁶⁵ Mináč was especially active publicly during the constitutional negotiations of the HZDS with the Czech Civic Democratic Party (*Občanská demokratická strana*, ODS) counterpart led by Václav Klaus following the electoral victory of the HZDS and the ODS in June 1992. Klaus, who considered Slovak politicians to be “nationalists who were falsely evoking 100-year-old national spirits when they should have been building a liberal civil society,”⁶⁶ firmly advocated strong federation competences or the dissolution of the federation against the HZDS’s confederation project. Finally, the clash of the incommensurable projects brought about the dissolution of the federation at the end of 1992⁶⁷

⁶³ M. Ferko, J. Chovanec and M. Tkáč, *Šesťdesiatjeden krokov k slovenskej identite - zvrchované Slovensko: zborník dokumentov* (Bratislava: Kubko-Goral, 1996), 11–19.

⁶⁴ Ibidem, 15.

⁶⁵ Vladimír Mináč harshly criticized Mečiar in 1990 while he was the VPN prime minister. He turned to praise Mečiar by late 1990 when Mečiar shifted towards nationalism. When Mináč was asked why he signed the Declaration of Sovereignty in July 1992, he answered that he already wrote the declaration twenty years ago in his main writings on Slovak history. Ferko, Chovanec, Tkáč, *Šesťdesiatjeden krokov*, 51. The already mentioned notorious HZDS minister of culture Ivan Hudec (see footnote 44 in this chapter) highly praised Mináč’s thought on the nation. See *Život a dielo Vladimíra Mináča*, ed. Červeňák, 12–14.

⁶⁶ Žák, “The Velvet Divorce,” 252.

⁶⁷ Ibidem, 262–265. The fact that Mečiar advocated to the very end the preservation of the common state with Czechs can be explained by the mutual agency of several factors. The one is the unwillingness of the international community to the emergence of the new independent states in Central and Eastern Europe due to security reasons. Also, there was a suspicion of both indigenous and international political elites in the institutional capacity of Slovakia to sustain it as an independent state. However, it was not only caused by the institutional non-capacity, but also by the historical legacy of the lack of the confidence in a sustainability of the independent state. See *The End of Czechoslovakia*, ed. Musil.

In a way to contest both the SNS far-right secessionist politics as well as the VPN-KDH more federalist approach and legitimize the HZDS's advocacy of the confederation, Mináč started with a neglect of national emancipation as well as the modernization effect of the inter-war period on Slovak society, and instead depicted "Czechoslovakism" as the cloak of purely Czech hegemony over Slovaks, appropriating thus "Ludak" grievances. He stretched the continuity of Czech hegemony by making historical parallels between the inter-war destruction of the Slovak craft by the Czech mass production industry and the early 1990s collapse of the Slovak heavy industry, making both historical landmarks of deliberate Czech hegemony over Slovakia. Then Mináč stretched the same line of the argument to the communist period, emphasizing the Czech taming of the Slovak National Uprising legacy, as well as the imprisonment of the national-consciousness communist Slovak uprising leaders (Gustáv Husák, Ladislav Novomeský, Vladimír Clementis).⁶⁸ However, Mináč simultaneously condemned the wartime fascist satellite state, not only from the point of totalitarianism, but also discarding it by the implementation of the plebeian myth, where the foundation of the state turns out to be a part of the teleological process of the historical "betrayal of elites." Hence he neglected the far-right interpretation of the war-time state's foundation as "the least evil." He proclaimed it instead as just one more example of the continuity of the historical elites' betrayal by serving the external hegemonists, while the folk were again left to struggle for their national emancipation, whose final expression was the SNP.⁶⁹

Mináč finally used the above exposed historical interpretation to discredit both VPN-KDH as well as the SNS politics molding them in the "historical betrayal" concept, accusing the far-right of compromising the Slovak state building by the revisionism towards the war-time history and the VPN for the role of "Prague Slovaks," meaning pure anti-national puppet executioners of the actual "Havelian" Czech hegemonic politics.⁷⁰ The conclusion was obvious: all existing parties were alien to the mythical body of the nation by being simple agents of the foreign interests while subsequently splintering the Slovak national body in its final strive for statehood. Hence, the national movement, which would bring about the end of suffering to national history, was finally founded in the HZDS and

⁶⁸ Ferko, Chovanec, Tkáč, *Šesťdesiatjeden krokov*, 52.

⁶⁹ V. Mináč, *Odkiaľ a kam, Slováci? Eseje o putovaní Slovákov dejinami a dneškom* (Bratislava: Remedium, 1993), 18–24.

⁷⁰ Ferko, Chovanec, Tkáč, *Šesťdesiatjeden krokov*, 52.

in the person of Vladimír Mečiar, "...originating from the milieu, where the people are making their everyday life by hard work..." hence characterized by the self-confidence and decisiveness to execute independence against both the historical continuity of Czech and the international hampering of the Slovak state-building.⁷¹ Here it is important to notice that Mináč exploited the ambiguity of the "plebeian myth," consisting of conceptualizing the historical character of Slovaks on one hand as "pigeon-soul like" surviving historically all conquests by the laborious relationship to the land, while on the other hand the fierce heroic individual would appeal and organize the people in their righteous rebellious fight for justice.⁷² Hence Mináč subsequently described Mečiar as "...fighter, boxer in the ring, matador in the arena..." taking the destiny of the nation in his own hands against contemplative, cowardly political leaders from other parties.⁷³ That "decisiveness and directness" transferred into the party's discourse building an image of a politician working around the clock and making all crucial government decisions "on his own and then addressing the people."⁷⁴

HZDS's National Identity-Building Narrative

Adopting the discourse of the left nationalist intellectuals, the HZDS was constituted as the state-founding (*štátotvorný*) "all-embracing peoples movement" (*hnutie všet'udoveho pohyba*),⁷⁵ which by gathering all nationally conscious Slovaks finally brought the end to the thousand-year statehood-seeking history. The concept of the state-founder accompanied

⁷¹ V. Mináč, *Návraty k prevratu* (Bratislava: NVK Internat, 1993), 136–140. In words of Marián Leško "The Slovaks like the political robustness of Mr. Mečiar, his decisiveness and directness, his skepticism towards a theories and inclination to the common knowledge of the people... his ability to speak like that, that the people perfectly understand him." Leško, *Mečiar a mečiarizmus*, 52.

⁷² For the twofold meaning of the plebeian myth, see Ľ. Lipták, "Oportunisti a či jánošiči" in *Nepre(tr)žitá dejiny: výber článkov, esejí, štúdií* (Bratislava: Q111, 2008); E. Krekovičová, "Mýtus plebejskeho národa" *Mýty naše Slovenské*, ed. Krekovič, Mannová and Krekovičová, 86–94.

⁷³ Mináč, *Návraty*, 136–140. In his early days Mečiar trained a boxing, which he was quite often emphasize as the symbol of his plebeian spirit and the political style. See also Baer, "Boxing and Politics."

⁷⁴ V. Mečiar, "Život po smrti" in *5 Rokov HZDS-a*, 28–29.

⁷⁵ V. Mečiar, "Europu chápeme ako domov všetkých národov," *Slovensko, do toho* 14, supplement to *Slovenská Republika* April 3, 1996, 8.

by the adjacent concept of the state and the nation savior were one of the main legitimizing tools especially during Mečiar's third (last) term 1994–1998. Namely, the 1994 political turmoil in Slovakia starting with the March parliamentary overthrow of Mečiar's second government (formed after the victory in the July 1992 elections) and lasting until the HZDS victory in the October 1994 snap elections⁷⁶ marked a threshold of the rise of authoritarianism in Slovak politics. It consisted of a cleansing of the state administration from the “disloyal cadres,” a subsequent restriction of the opposition's political and cultural activities, freedom of the press, and finally in the non-transparent privatization process.⁷⁷ The authoritarianism of the government was legitimized by labeling the opposition as “Prague-Slovaks,” or the agents of the Hungarian interests, or in a case of economic politics to be the corrupted oppositional elites tending to open the country to foreign neo-liberal colonialist capital for their own selfish material interests.⁷⁸ Also, the international community's critique of the government's authoritarian tendencies resulted in the EU and NATO's blocking of Slovak membership. The government countered this by the interpretation of EU and NATO policies as the expression of the Western historical aversion towards Slovak independence.⁷⁹

In everyday politics, Mečiar backed the afore-depicted arguments by the use of historical analogies, which Jan Werner-Müller describes as using earlier historical experiences in legitimizing domestic and international politics as especially convenient since they reduce the complexity of politics and thus create instant legitimacy.⁸⁰ Mečiar most often used them in regard to the narrative of the unbroken historical victimization of the nation to the victimization of his own party and himself thus underlining the savior concept. One of the most famous of Mečiar's analogies is the one between the March 1994 overthrow of his government and the early 1939 overthrow of the short-lived post-Munich HSLA autonomous

⁷⁶ For a good, sometimes sarcastic and humoristic description of the 1994 political turmoil in Slovakia see Leško, *Mečiar a mečiarizmus*, 94–169.

⁷⁷ For a good and very detailed depiction of politics of the Mečiar's 1994–98 government see Global Reports on Slovakia, published annually by the Institute for Public Affairs (*Inštitút pre verejné otázky*).

⁷⁸ V. Mečiar, “Hnutie je súčasťou revolúcie,” *Slovensko, do toho* 13, supplement to *Slovenská Republika* March 26, 1996, 1; Augustín Marián Húska cited in M. Bútora and P. Hunčík, eds., *Global report on Slovakia: Comprehensive Analyses from 1995 and Trends From 1996* (Bratislava: Sandor Marai Foundation, 1997), 21.

⁷⁹ Ibidem.

⁸⁰ Müller, “Introduction,” 25–28.

government by the contemporaneous Czechoslovak president Emil Hácha.⁸¹ However, the most significant is the one following the EU demarche on Slovakia's democratic deficit in October 1995 when Mečiar stretched the historical parallel between the contemporaneous EU politics and earlier international politics towards Slovakia stating "Deciding about us without our presence happened here (in western Europe-S.Đ.) already in the years 1938, 1939 and 1968. Are there not enough of these kinds of experiences?!"⁸² However, the persuasiveness of the depicted historical discourse in everyday politics could be achieved only if backed by the comprehensive national-identity building narrative which, to repeat, was offered by the left-nationalists' narrative on the intellectual discourses on national history.

Hence, the HZDS national-identity building narrative encompassed the legacy of the Cyrilo-Methodius literary tradition, Ludovít Štúr's nineteenth century National Awakening movement, the inter-war Hlinka's People's party striving for Slovak autonomy, and finally the legacy of the Slovak National Uprising, subsequently adding to it the post-1945 statehood attempt of the Slovak communists.⁸³ Hence, the left-wing intellectuals, now basically serving as the HZDS national-identity builders, finally appropriated the "L'udak" interpretation of the Great-Moravian Empire as the first Slovak state and the interpretation of Slovak history within the Hungarian kingdom as the period of the "dark ages,"⁸⁴ subsequently

⁸¹ Following the Munich agreement in 1938 the Czechoslovak government recognized the proclaimed Slovak autonomous government in late 1938, however dissolving it shortly after, in the eve of the German occupation of the Czech Lands and the subsequent proclamation of the Slovak Nazi-Puppet republic. See Lipták, *Slovensko v 20. storočí*.

⁸² V. Mečiar, *Slovensko, dôveruj si!* (Bratislava: R-Press, 1998), 164. The spokesmen of the government Stanislav Haber "emboldened" Mečiar's announcement by constructing parallels between the Nazi demarche to Jozef Tiso preceding the proclamation of Slovak independence in March 1939, the Soviet demarche to Dubček preceding the Soviet occupation in August 1968 and the actual EU demarche. It is interesting that Haber soon afterwards was immediately removed by Mečiar. See. Leško, *Mečiar a mečiarizmus*, 136.

⁸³ V. Mečiar, "Hnutie je súčasťou revolúcie; Program Hnutia za Demokratické Slovensko-1991" in *Dejiny píše ľudia- 15 rokov L'S-HZDS*, ed. I. Žvach (Bratislava: L'udová strana-Hnutie za demokratické Slovensko, 2006), 11.

⁸⁴ M. Ferko et al., *Slovak Republic: Old Nation -- Young State* (Bratislava: Print-Servis, 1998). The Slovak edition of the book, titled *Starý národ - mladý štát*, was published in 1994. The fact that the Slovak edition was published by the Slovak National Bank and then subsequently translated and published by the ministry of culture in 1998 shows that the book was primarily aimed for the legitimization of the HZDS national identity-building politics. It is also obvious from the quite simple and condensed overview of

making parallels between the ninth century uprising against the rule of the Franks and the SNP,⁸⁵ or bringing the political roles of Gustáv Husák, Ladislav Novomeský, and Vladimír Clementis into the realm of the Cyril and Methodius legacy of martyrdom for the nation.⁸⁶ While the interpretation of the inter-war history followed along lines exposed already by Mináč,⁸⁷ HZDS's "preservation of the past within the present" national-identity building discourse turned out to be by far the most important in respect to the interpretations of the Second World War and the following communist government, which would, in the words of Shari Cohen, release the population from the historical responsibility and the need to come to terms with the past of both totalitarian regimes.⁸⁸

Hence, the history of the communist regime was framed within the discourse of the totalitarian oppression of the regime over the democratic freedom as well as the Slovak national identity. In a way to release the collective memory from the already exposed concept equating the Normalization period with the non-liberal path of the Slovak national identity-building process, the HZDS's intellectuals prescribed the totalitarian communist legacy exclusively to the Czechs.⁸⁹ In the same way, the Nor-

Slovak history from early medieval times to the present stressing of the crucial concepts of the HZDS narrative on national history: the antiquity of the Slovak nation, the thousand-year-old Hungarian oppression, the Slovak national-identity-building suppression both during the inter-war as well the post-war Czechoslovakia. Finally the description of the independence gaining framed it in the theology of thousand-year-statehood seeking process.

⁸⁵ The narration of the uprising of the Great Moravia population against the Frank government in the 9th century was depicted as the uprising, which involved the whole population, from the purest peasant to the highest noblemen in a harmonious alliance against foreign hegemony. Ferko et al., *Slovak Republic: Old Nation - Young State*, 33. Ferko stated "It was the first Slovak uprising!" (ibid, bold in original), leaving no doubt that the 9th century rebellion is brought into the parallel with the SNP, as Andrej Findor emphasized. See A. Findor, "(De)Constructing Slovak National Mythology," *Sociológia-Slovak Sociological Review* 3 (2002): 198–199.

⁸⁶ M. Ferko, *V zápase o zvrchovanosť : výber z publicistiky 1989–2003* (Bratislava: Kubko-Goral, 2004), 30–31.

⁸⁷ Ferko et al., *Old Nation - Young State*, 105–125.

⁸⁸ Cohen, *Politics Without a Past*, 65.

⁸⁹ J. Ferko, *Hviezdna chvíľa Slovenska : výber z politickej publicistiky 1990–1998* (Bratislava: Merkury, 1998), 275–279; A. M. Húška, *Svedectvo o štátopisovom príbehu: spomínanie a rozjímanie nad slovenským a českým štátopisovným údelom* (Bratislava: SCM, 2006), 66–72. It was even emphasized that communism in Slovakia was established and led by the Czech communists in 1918 (Fenko et al., *Old Nation - Young State*, 114). The fall of the 1948 democratic government is interpreted in the light of the Czech

malization period was conceptualized to have been imposed by the Soviets against the will of the Slovak people, with the subsequent annex that the new federal constitution of the state to some extent opened the nationhood and statehood building processes.⁹⁰ This twofold approach to the Normalization period served quite apparently the purposes of the HZDS legitimization, since the ideology of the all-embracing national movement could not afford the open and unequivocal praising of the regime. Its authoritarian character didn't enjoy the support of the population, but also the regime's mutilation of the prerogatives of the federal units in the early 1970s couldn't be inbuilt into the national narrative. Hence, the positive legacy of the 1968 federal constitution as well as the economic modernization was contested by emphasizing the processes of centralization as well as the regime's repressions. Henceforth the positive stress on the national consciousness by Gustáv Husák and his associates was contested by their post-1968 role of the "Prague Slovaks"—meaning the agents of the regime centralization politics and the subjugators of the further Slovak national-emancipation process—which was somehow interpreted as not their willing act, but an unwilling and inevitable process.⁹¹ That is the reason why Mečiar, while condemning communist totalitarianism, used to emphasize the role of the Slovak "socialist patriots"—ranging from the elite to the rank-and-file party members—in the effort to push further the Slovak national and social emancipation, drawing a continuity from the Uprising to the breakdown of the regime.⁹²

The interpretation of the SNP as the milestone of the modern Slovak nationhood- and statehood-building process was important both for the international and domestic politics. Internationally, the legacy of the SNP was important since it redeemed the Slovak nationhood- and the statehood-building process previously compromised by the legacy of the war-

bourgeoisie parties refusal to cooperate with the Slovak anti-fascist bourgeois factions due to the formers' unconditional advocacy of the Czechoslovak unitarism, while the communist government take-over in February 1948 is prescribed predominantly to the Czechs due to the strength of the Communist party in the Czech lands.

⁹⁰ Ferko et al., *Old Nation - Young State*, 132–142.

⁹¹ Ibidem. The myth of the Slovak alienation after going to Prague is especially nicely pinpointed by Mináč. He elaborated on the Husák's "denationalization" by framing it into the unwilling historical destiny of all the nationally conscious Slovaks leaving for Prague. See Mináč, *Návraty*, 43–45. For the public image of Gustáv Husák see M. Barnovský, "Gustáv Husák- realita a mýty" in *Mýty naše Slovenské*, ed. Krekovič, Man- nová and Krekovičová, 207–224.

⁹² Mečiar, *Slovensko, dôveruj si!*, 52, 62.

time Slovak Nazi puppet state. In domestic politics, the interpretation of the SNP was important since it was contested by the far-right SNS, especially during the years 1994-98 when the SNS was the minor coalition partner in the HZDS government.

The SNS was a typical, radical right-wing party with the thin ideology focused exclusively on the fervent far-right Slovak nationalism expressed by the slogan, "Slovakia for the Slovaks," hence being radically anti-Hungarian while also having strong anti-Czech resentment, especially in the early 1990s.⁹³ As already mentioned, the party national identity-building bred a strong revisionism towards the Slovak Nazi-puppet state, gathering the cohort of the intellectuals originating from the WWII émigré circles. The revisionism obtained peak publicity by the international scandal in 1997 after the book *Dejiny Slovenska a Slovákov* [History of Slovakia and Slovaks] was introduced in public schools as the auxiliary textbook. The book, written by one of the most prominent right-wing historians originating from the WWII émigré circles, Milan Ďurica, comprised the entire span of the far-right revisionist WWII interpretation. The regime was depicted as authoritarian, while fascist traces were prescribed to the minor, radical right-wing faction as well as to the Germans, to whom is also prescribed extermination of the 60,000 Slovak Jews. Moreover, the head of state Jozef Tiso was presented as the savior of various Jews and anti-fascists, while the state was presented as an economic welfare island in the occupied Europe that moreover preserved Slovaks from Nazi and Hungarian annihilation. Finally, the SNP was depicted as having acted in betrayal of both communist and bourgeois "Prague Slovaks" against their own state, leading Slovakia back to the Czechoslovak "dark ages."⁹⁴

After the international intervention Mečiar condemned the book and had it withdrawn from schools. The whole issue with the book originated from a few factors. The 1994 political turmoil brought about a strong polarization of the electorate on the nationalist vs. opposition/Europeanist block. Although the HZDS wanted a coalition with the communist party successor called the Party of the Democratic Left (*Strana demokratickej ľavice*, SDL), after its rebuff Mečiar turned to the SNS in addition to the

⁹³ See footnote 54 in this chapter.

⁹⁴ M. S. Ďurica, *Dejiny Slovenska a Slovákov* (Bratislava: Media Trade - SPN, 1996); D. Kováč, "How Slovak Historiography Is Coming to Terms with Its 'Dual Past,'" in *Totalitarian and Authoritarian Regimes in Europe: Legacies and Lessons from the Twentieth Century*, ed. J. W. Borejsza and K. Ziemer (New York: Berghahn Books, 2006), 106-122.

SDL's minor seceded faction, the Union of the Workers of Slovakia (*Združenie robotníkov Slovenska*, ZRS).⁹⁵ The 1994 political polarization indeed "listed" the HZDS more to the right; the contemporaneous programmatic documents stress much stronger than before on Christian morality to be the desirable foundation for Slovak society, stating moreover that the family should be the traditional base of morality in society, as well as paying honor to the churches by defining them to be the historical bearers and saviors of the Slovak national identity.⁹⁶ Here it is obvious that the HZDS appropriated the HSLS national-identity building concept—also in a way to contest the KDH still being the second strongest party—however just switching Catholicism to Christianity in accordance with the HZDS's "all-embracing national movement" self-definition.⁹⁷ Moreover, the 1994–1998 period witnessed an emergence of the quite strong right-wing faction within the HZDS, which together with the far-right intellectuals, pushed for Jozef Tiso's rehabilitation.⁹⁸ However, Mečiar and the left-nationalist major faction couldn't allow too much room for the right-wing, probably feeling that it would not only compromise the movement's red nationalist position, but also subsequently would further harm Slovakia's weak international position.

Hence, in a way to contest the far-right-wing WWII narrative, HZDS basically appropriated previous "red-nationalist" conceptualizations of the SNP as the all-embracing national uprising against the alien fascist regime

⁹⁵ For a good explanation of political processes see Deegan-Krause, *Elected Affinities*.

⁹⁶ *Slovensko, do toho! Programové tézy HZDS na Vol'by 1994* (Bratislava: HZDS, 1994), 89; *Programové vyhlásenie vlády Slovenskej republiky, 19–20, 25–26. januára 1995*, 56–63.

⁹⁶ From the first program onwards the HZDS had been stating the Christian values represent desirable societal values relating them moreover to the depicted Cyril and Methodius legacy. See "Program Hnutia za Demokratické Slovensko 1991," in *Dejiny píšu ľudia- 15 rokov L'S-HZDS*, ed. I. Žvach (Bratislava: L'udová strana-Hnutie za demokratické Slovensko, 2006), 10–12; "Programové vyhlásenie vlády Slovenskej republiky, 14–15. júla 1992," *Zbierka zákonov* 1869 (1992), 31.

⁹⁷ On the 1994 elections the HZDS got 30.5% while the KDH got 10.1% of the votes. Here is important to emphasize that although the Slovak society was comprised from the great majority of Catholics, the Protestant and Greco-Catholic minorities represent a visible part of the population. The Protestants also represented the outstanding portion of the nineteenth century so called Slovak national-awakeners.

⁹⁸ G. Hoffmann (ed.), *Zamĺčaná pravda o Slovensku: Prvá Slovenská republika: Prvý slovenský prezident Dr. Jozef Tiso: Tragédia slovenských židov podľa nových dokumentov* (Partizánske: Garmond, 1996); O. Dostál, "Minorities," in *Global report on Slovakia*, ed. Bútora and Hunčík, 72.

of the war time Slovak state. The SNP was emphasized again as the milestone of Slovak modern national emancipation, with an even stronger stress on the conceptualization of the uprising as the massive scale of people's participation. In Mečiar's words, the role of the communist in the SNP was not so crucially important, since it was "...a mass scale uprising of the broadest strata of Slovak society against the fascist regime."⁹⁹ Moreover, the HZDS contested a "neo-Ludak" claim for the war-time Slovak Republic to be the embodiment of the historical Slovak striving for the independent state by incorporating the SNP into the "plebeian myth" concept. Hence, the uprising was labeled as the expression "of the few centuries long folk statehood striving," as well as the national-emancipation fight of the Slovak folk by which supreme sovereignty is taken back from the non-legitimate, pro-fascist regime to the folk.¹⁰⁰ In that line of the interpretation, both the political and the statehood projects of the various SNP factions were darkened since they were all presented as the homogeneous fighting oneness for the Slovak statehood emancipation, whose striving was eventually hindered due to the international pressure for the renewal of pre-war Czechoslovakia.¹⁰¹ The depicted line of the argument served to make the teleological concept of the national statehood thrive; since if the various insurgent factions were labeled to fight for the statehood, the SNP subsequently turns out to be the uprising against the regime, and not against the independent state, which is moreover now stressed as the historical proof that the Slovaks could govern themselves.¹⁰²

To conclude, by taking over the "Red Nationalist's" discourse, the HZDS managed to present itself as the agent which finally realized the thousand-year statehood striving process "begotten" by the SNP and the Slovak communists. Approaching it from the concept of the "plebeian character" of Slovak history—whose part was the interpretation that the

⁹⁹ Mečiar, *Slovensko, dôveruj si!*, 90.

¹⁰⁰ P. Števček, *Zápisy zápasov: výber z publicistiky 1989–2002* (Bratislava: Vydavateľstvo Spolku slovenských spisovateľov, 2002), 120–122.

¹⁰¹ J. Chovanec, *Cesta k zvrchovanosti Slovenskej republiky* (Bratislava: Slovenská Informačná Agentúra, 1997), 22–28.

¹⁰² Mečiar, *Slovensko, dôveruj si!*, 37–39; Chovanec, *Cesta k zvrchovanosti*, 20–21. The concept of the Slovak wartime state as the proof that the Slovaks could govern themselves appeared in the ranks of the Slovak communists already in 1968. See R. Kaliský, "Rok narodenia: 1944" in *Konfrontácia*, ed. Krno and Števček (Bratislava: Smena, 1968), 166. However, the mentioned concept was probably too contesting to be inbuilt into the core of the communist master narrative on the nation, so it appeared only after 1990.

nation hadn't yet succeeded in achieving independence due to the historical betrayal of the elites serving the foreign centers of power—the HZDS managed to delegitimize other parties as the traitors of the nation by accusing them of serving the foreign centers of power (Slovak liberals), or for being directed to the pro-fascist aims (SNS), or simply for being too partisan and weak to lead the country towards independence (KDH). The positioning of the red nationalist discourse as the master-narrative of the Slovak national identity-building process can also be seen in two subsequent facts: the first one is the fact that Mečiar's government in 1995–1996 entered an open and fierce public clash with the Catholic Church—prior to 1945 the main agent of the Slovak national identity-building—and still stayed the single strongest Slovak political party until the early 2000s. Namely, the Church in 1995 publicly condemned the authoritarian tendencies of the government neglecting the HZDS's proclaimed embodiment of Christian values, which immediately provoked the HZDS counteractions from the accusation of the Church for siding with the Opposition to a police search of the diocesan seat of the contemporaneous chairman of the Slovak Bishops' Conference justified as an investigation into illegal activities relating to Church property.¹⁰³ Finally, it could be said that the red-nationalist national identity-building discourse has been appropriated by the actual strongest Slovak political party SMER-SD (*Smer – sociálna demokracia*; Direction—Social Democracy). The SMER's national identity-building narrative emphasizes the thousand-year statehood narrative, the state- and nation-building legacy of the Great Moravian Empire as well as the inter-war HSLS, with subsequently a special emphasis on the communist saviors of the nation, especially on Vladimír Mináč.¹⁰⁴ Moreover, the party's leader Robert Fico presents himself as the

¹⁰³ *Global report on Slovakia*, ed. Bútora and Hunčík, 19. In the 1990s the Church was divided in the support for the KDH and the HZDS, while still a slight majority supported the former. P. Zajac, "Culture," in *Global report on Slovakia*, ed. Bútora and Hunčík, 204.

¹⁰⁴ M. Hanus and J. Majchrák, "Môže mať pravica väčšinu?," *Týždeň*, April 26, 2010, 28. From the symbolical point of view especially significant is the erection of the statue of the Great Moravian king Svätopluk on Bratislava castle just on the eve of the 2010 parliamentary elections. The sculptor of the statue is the most outstanding Normalization regime sculptor Jan Kulich. See L. Snopko, "Vasil' Bil'ak na Hrad?," *SME*, June 9, 2010, 27. Moreover, Fico in 2007 erected a memorial plate on the parliamentary building commemorating the proclamation of the Declaration of the Slovak sovereignty in 1992. The plate quotes words of Vladimír Mináč spoken on that occasion: "There is right over all rights: that is our sovereignty. There is the constitution over all constitutions: that is the constitution of the free Slovak Republic. Amen!"

leader of the exploited folk against the actual exploitation of the neo-liberal capital, where the party's supporters share "optimistic views about societal changes going all the way back to November 1989."¹⁰⁵ Given the SMER's political dominance in the Slovak party system, it can be concluded: the afore depicted comments prove that the red-nationalist identity-building discourse became the dominant master narrative of the Slovak national identity-building process.¹⁰⁶ Or in other words, that the continuation of the "preservation of the (Normalization period) past within the present" would stay the dominant faction of Slovak politics; at least for some time.

¹⁰⁵ Z. Bútorová, O. Gyárfášová and V. Krivý, "Slovakia Votes: Public Opinion and Electoral Behavior," in Martin Bútora et al., eds., *Democracy and Populism in Central Europe* (Bratislava: Institute for Public Affairs, 2007), 61.

¹⁰⁶ This claim can be subsequently bolded by the fact that the HZDS's position of the single strongest party was overthrown only on the parliamentary election in 2006, coinciding with SMER's final consolidation in 2005. On the three last rounds of the elections (2006, 2010, 2012) SMER got 30–40 % of votes, similar to the HZDS in the 1990s. See G. Mesežnikov et al, *Slovenské voľby '06: výsledky, príčiny, súvislosti* (Bratislava: Inštitút pre verejné otázky, 2006).

Post-Communist Europe

On the Path to a Regional Regime of Remembrance?

ZOLTÁN DUJISIN

Following the accession of eight Central and Eastern European countries into the European Union in 2004, some harbored expectations that these fresh democratic polities would soon integrate into the broader political culture of the EU. That would include embracing its regime of remembrance, that is, the institutionalized rituals that express a polity's approach to providing a framework for citizens to relate to their own histories. This supranational regime of remembrance is defined as much by the content of "collective memories"—their mnemonic substance—as it is by the manner in which these memories are constructed and sustained—their modes of remembrance. Most of the literature has argued Europe has based its memory regime on a "politics of regret,"¹ involving increasing admission of national guilt,² the pluralization of previously marginalized memories³ and the uniqueness of the Holocaust as Europe's negative founding formula.⁴

¹ J. K. Olick, *The politics of regret: on collective memory and historical responsibility* (New York: Routledge, 2007).

² See M. Pakier and B. Strath, *A European Memory? Contested Histories and Politics of Remembrance* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2010); For national examples see R. J. Golsan, "Introduction to the English Language Edition: The Politics of History and Memory in France in the 1990s" in H. Rousso, *Stalinism and Nazism: History and Memory Compared* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2004); and also N. L. Immler, "Too little, too late?" Compensation and family memory: Negotiating Austria's Holocaust past," *Memory Studies* 5, 3 (2012): 270–281.

³ J. W. Müller, *Memory & Power in Post-war Europe: Studies in the presence of the Past* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 9; for a national example see for instance B. Conway, "Local conditions, global environment and transnational discourses in memory work: The case of Bloody Sunday (1972)" *Memory Studies* 1, 2 (2008): 187–209.

⁴ S. Troebst, "Halecki Revisited: Europe's Conflicting Cultures of Remembrance" in *A European Memory?*, ed. Pakier and Strath, 56–63; D. Rupnow, "Transforming the Ho-

Instead, post-communist political elites have used the political opportunity structures provided by European membership to challenge the memory regime hitherto promoted by Brussels, deploying a state-driven institutional apparatus to pursue the establishment of a mnemonic regime based on the equalization of communist and Nazi crimes and on the externalization of the communist experience. While it is tempting to dismiss this supposed “clash of memories” as the result of a natural urge from the East to have its own narrative of the past recognized by Europe, I will argue that a closer look at the institutions and actors involved in this “challenge from the East,” as well as to their sources of political support, shows otherwise. Applying a method of process tracing, whose conclusions are confirmed by elite interviews, I argue that rather than reflecting societal consensus, this narrative, loosely based on theories of totalitarianism, has achieved a high degree of institutionalization thanks to considerable political investment by the post-communist Right. Politicians support memory politics as a crucial competitive political dimension, legitimating their actions at home and abroad by aligning interests with similarly oriented actors across borders and, domestically, with those sectors of the scholarly community that endow the aforementioned narrative with academic authority. This alignment allows memory actors to present on European platforms a discourse that implicitly claims consensual backing, in sharp contrast to their concerted efforts at home that are geared towards modifying mental frameworks allegedly damaged by communist socialization in a highly polarized mnemonic environment.

Collective Memory as Institutionalized Narratives

In any treatment of the topic of “collective memory,” the dangers of reification loom large, requiring a careful consideration and problematization of the concept.⁵ In the context of a collectivity, memory cannot be taken in its literal sense in the same manner as psychiatrists or social psychologists understand it in the individual sense. Only individuals remember.

locust: Remarks after the Beginning of the 21st Century” in *Justice and Memory. Confronting traumatic pasts. An international comparison*, ed. R. Wodak and G. Auer-Borea (Vienna: Passagen Verlag, 2009), 67–78; for a more regional example see C.F. Banke, “The Legacies of the Holocaust in Scandinavian Small State Foreign Policy” *Justice and Memory*, ed. Wodak and Auer-Borea, 265–276.

⁵ J.K. Olick, *States of Memory: Continuities, Conflicts, and Transformations in National Retrospection* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2003), 7.

Collectivities at most agree on a cultural and social construct⁶ that binds them in a common identity that may or may not be related to personal recollections of a particular, often multifaceted event. Jan-Werner Müller, aware of the all too many facile analogies between collective and individual memory in the literature, distinguishes between what is variously called a “collective” or “national” memory on the one hand and a mass individual memory on the other. The two are more often than not in contradiction with each other since mass-individual memory pertains to the individual’s own recollection of events as experienced more or less directly, whereas “collective memory” describes the “social framework through which nationally conscious individuals can organize their history,”⁷ a category of individuals that includes public intellectuals, historians, journalists and politicians, and who can be termed as “memory makers” or “memory builders.”

Whereas mass-individual memory bases itself on the heterogeneous recollections any historical event or period produces in individuals, “collective memory” is based on an arguably conscious drive to create a minimal consensus as to how the period in question should be recalled and what significance should be attached to it. This memory is to be internalized by citizens as their own at the expense of more informal, communicative forms of memory⁸, and while it lacks the rigor and dispassionate analysis of historiography, it is certainly based on more than mere myths. To these reflections, fundamental to what lies ahead, I add a tentative definition of “collective memory,” understood here as a relatively coherent discourse, which backed by a set of political rituals and commemorations, is promoted by specific social groups (memory makers) who seek wider recognition and adoption of their own interpretation of the past. This interpretation is always contingent on broader power relations and cannot be deemed to emerge naturally from a series of events whose reading is undisputed.

Questions about history are thus never truly only about the past itself. In contrast to anthropological and cultural approaches to collective memory, political approaches focus essentially on how memory is deployed in the struggle for control and influence over the state⁹ and how these strug-

⁶ *A European Memory?*, ed. Pakier and Strath, 7.

⁷ Müller, *Memory & Power in Post-war Europe*, 3.

⁸ J. Assmann, “Collective Memory and Cultural Identity,” *New German Critique* 65 (Spring-Summer 1995): 125–133.

⁹ M. P. Friedman and P. Kenney, *Partisan Histories: The Past in Contemporary Global Politics* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), 3.

gles involve negotiations around societal understandings of history.¹⁰ Collective memories often serve to strengthen particular interpretations of national identity, but cannot be considered to speak in the name of the nation or to represent it in any way. It is always a smaller group or network that promotes a particular narrative of the past with the hope of reifying it, that is of having a national population recognize it as its own. At the same time, we must avoid a second “national” trap and realize collective memories are increasingly adopting a global dimension: even if the ultimate goal is to instill such memory on a national population, the legitimacy gained by international recognition and global sharing of a memory is extremely powerful. An analysis of collective memory dynamics is therefore much more than a mere study of history, it is also a way to unearth hidden power dynamics. As Max Paul Friedman points out, ultimately “whether an interpretation flourishes in the public sphere is determined not by guardians of an academic discipline but by the broader political context of the society in which it appears.”¹¹

Collective memories are therefore not the memories of a national collectivity. Rather, they are a narrative of the past through which memory-makers, such as public intellectuals, historians, journalists and politicians, select what should be remembered and how we should remember it. Both the “what” and the “how” of memory politics are essential in defining the prevailing *regime of remembrance*. These are understood as a set of formally or informally institutionalized rituals that embody the manner in which a specific, national, or regional political culture provides opportunities for citizens to relate to established interpretations of the past. Regimes of remembrance should be dissected into three components, the first of which should answer the question of “what memory” we observe, while the other two ought to illuminate the fashion in which that same memory is constructed and sustained, allowing us to approximate the agents of memory. These components are: a) their *mnemonic substance*, that is, of the content of collective memory, its founding myths and historical interpretations; b) the regime’s *modes of remembrance*, which revolve around the terms under which the injunction to remember is cast on the population: is there a moral imperative to remember? Do we remember an event by honoring victims, by promoting dialogue or by enumerating crimes? Is guilt placed on the in-group or is it externalized? Which goal takes prece-

¹⁰ H. Uhl, “Culture, Politics, Palimpsest: Theses on Memory and Society” in *A European Memory?*, ed. Pakier and Strath, 83.

¹¹ Friedman and Kenney, *Partisan histories*, 6.

dence, justice or forgiveness? And finally c) the *memory practices* that characterize a given regime, meaning the techniques employed by memory-makers to institutionalize a narrative of the past and transmit the injunction to remember, whether they involve setting up research institutes, museums, changing school curricula, pursuing international cooperation, organizing awareness campaigns and so on.

To conclude this small theoretical introduction, it should be noted that the transnational scope of this paper presents additional challenges. The trends noted in what follows should not be understood as a perfect, totalizing fit to all the cases included: obviously in order to transcend the national framework certain generalizations are necessary but these should be understood as attempts to set ideal-typical categories that, depending on the dimensions analyzed, some national cases will approximate more than others. Due to space limitations, not all exceptions to the transnationally defined dimensions can be pointed out extensively, but an effort will be made to hint at the most noteworthy subtleties that can enrich the overall understanding of the phenomenon at hand. This is perhaps a necessary shortcoming that will allow us to grasp the more transnational and unexplored aspects of post-communist memory politics.

The EU's Memory Regime

During the second half of the twentieth century Europe developed as the region of collective memory par excellence, traumatized by the brutality of the Second World War and of Nazi crimes, and ever since called upon to come to terms with its own past. The Holocaust became the referential locus for any endeavor to "collectively remember" the past, but the recognition of its centrality to European political culture was a long and uneven process whose general contours can only be briefly described here.

In the decade that followed the Second World War, EU founders placed the Holocaust at the core of a new project to build a united and peaceful Europe, even as national leaders were often unenthusiastic about embracing a consensual and transnational narrative of the recent past. Instead, domestic political considerations often called for the denial of the extent of popular collaboration with Nazi occupying forces, accompanied by the glorification of domestic resistance and an exaggeration of its extent. These roles began to be questioned only in the 1970s, after a generational change had occurred, leading to a globalization of a Holocaust discourse and kicking off what would be known as a new European "politics of regret."

A decisive impetus for the affirmation of the Holocaust as the central element of European “collective memory” came with the events of 1989, when the countries emerging from state socialism began their own process of coming to terms with the past and the wider European significance of the Holocaust became more obvious. Prominent Western European leaders decisively embarked on institutionalizing a new European “politics of regret” in a process which initially saw post-communist leaders participating mostly as abiding observers, eager to comply with both formal and informal requirements for membership in organizations such as NATO and, above all, the EU.

Confronting a country’s historical responsibility for Nazi collaboration had developed into a test of its commitment to a liberal-democratic political culture. This decisive shift in the EU’s culture of remembrance was not restricted to the sphere of informality, and the new millennium witnessed decisive measures aimed at the institutionalization of a regime of memory based on “politics of regret,” resulting in what Sorin Antohi calls “a putative European memory” being “crafted in the offices of the European Commission by means of official *lieux de memoire*.”¹² What had been mostly restricted to uncoordinated yet converging national political rituals of regret became increasingly the object of a coordinated attempt at institutionalizing and formalizing a transnational and official “collective memory” through various days of commemoration, museums, monuments, and initiatives to harmonize history textbooks and teaching.¹³ The European Parliament proved its continuing commitment to this process with a resolution on remembrance of the Holocaust, anti-Semitism, and racism passed on January 27, 2005. The EU also engaged in funding historical research and in establishing a House of European History with the goal of integrating particularistic narratives of the past into a European “collective memory.” Rather than pretending to be the ultimate arbiter of history, the EU has presented its role in these initiatives as one of a moderator who brings a plurality of parties to the negotiating table in the hope that European partners learn from each other’s often contrasting historical experiences.

¹² S. Antohi, “Narratives Unbound: A Brief Introduction to Post-communist Historical Studies” in *Narratives Unbound: Historical Studies in Post-communist Eastern Europe*, ed. S. Antohi, B. Trencsényi and P. Apor, (Budapest: Central European University Press, 2007), XVI.

¹³ S. Berger, “Remembering the Second World War in Western Europe, 1945–2005” in *A European Memory?*, ed. Pakier and Strath, 128.

Nevertheless, this pluralistic approach has a non-negotiable item: the Holocaust's referential quality as humanity's "absolute evil." This inherent tension between pluralism and an unquestionable founding formula highlights vulnerabilities in the political culture of the EU, vulnerabilities that can be exploited by memory-makers who wish to challenge the institutionalized memory regime.

Until recently the memory of the Holocaust had stood out as the one and only consensual element of remembrance among EU-builders and national leaders in what is still an unfinished project of European "collective memory." The reason for such consensus was partly that the significance of the Holocaust went well beyond the institutional borders of the EU: the Holocaust embodied a global imperative as to the political-normative considerations that should prevail in tackling past injustices, functioning as an extremely powerful, albeit informal mechanism to command remembrance, at times through comparisons that seek to capitalize on its powerful symbolism. Daniel Levy claims the Holocaust "evolved from a European concern into a universal cipher primarily via the related legal codification of crimes against humanity"¹⁴ resulting in constant references to it in the public sphere, references aimed at legitimating everything from "humanitarian interventions" to Europe's politics of multiculturalism. The West's commitment to upholding the global centrality of the Holocaust was reaffirmed by such events as the "Stockholm International Forum on the Holocaust: A conference on education, remembrance, and research" in 2000, a gathering repeated yearly until the EU's eastward enlargement in 2004. The forum was inspired by prominent Western leaders such as Bill Clinton, Tony Blair, and Goran Persson, and constituted another important step in affirming the Holocaust's global significance.

Holocaust vs. Totalitarianism

The mnemonic standards that Western leaders developed and that the EU institutionalized as part of its political culture were quickly transmitted to the post-communist countries eager to join Western European and North Atlantic political, economic and military structures, above all NATO and

¹⁴ D. Levy, "Changing imperatives and the Internationalization of Memory Cultures" in *Memory and the future: Transnational politics, ethics and society*, ed. Y. Gutman, A. D. Brown and A. Sodaro (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), 18.

the EU. In an arguably hesitant fashion, applicant countries responded to informal requirements from Brussels to come to terms with their own Nazi pasts.¹⁵ EU expectations that the East takes a stance towards the Holocaust constituted an opportunity for accession countries to prove their commitment to liberal and democratic values, and these indirect European requests often resulted in concrete action on the part of post-communist candidate countries. Yet, just as often these same requests became mired in controversy in a region where an alleged Western insensitivity to its suffering under communism caused irritation in some circles.

Moreover, but not necessarily related to the phenomenon mentioned above, Western pressure to set the Holocaust record straight was at times met with defensiveness in a region where high-profile political and intellectual actors exhibited a preference for externalizing national responsibility. Michael Shafir¹⁶ notes a particular form of externalization of guilt that he describes as *deflective negationism*, a phenomenon that consists in transferring “the guilt for the perpetration of crimes to members of other nations,” especially Germany, or in minimizing “own-nation participation in their perpetration to insignificant ‘aberrations.’” This tendency was visible even in such Holocaust-centered events as the First Stockholm International Forum on the Holocaust, during which Latvian President Vaira Vike-Freiberga condemned the Holocaust and its perpetrators but underlined that “Latvia as a country having ceased to exist at the time, the Nazi German occupying powers bear the ultimate responsibility for the crimes they committed or instigated on Latvian soil.”¹⁷

While Eastern Europe witnessed the establishment of various Holocaust memorials and museums, the fall of the Iron Curtain did not generally lead to a public reevaluation of the role of pre-communist regimes in collaborating with Nazi rule. Meanwhile, the post-communist region had been busier dealing with the recent historical experience of communism since the very onset of transition, hardly waiting for the EU to spur it into action. Yet the process of coming to terms with the past was quickly hi-

¹⁵ Rupnow, “Transforming the Holocaust,” 69; F. Whiting, “Damnatio Memoriae and the Power of Remembrance: Reflections on Memory and History” in *A European Memory?*, ed. Pakier and Strath, 83; K. H. Jarausch, “Nightmares or daydreams? A postscript on the Europeanisation of Memories” in *A European Memory?*, ed. Pakier and Strath, 314.

¹⁶ M. Shafir, “Deflective Negationism of the Holocaust in Post-communist East-Central Europe (Part 1): The Germans did it Alone,” *East European Perspectives*, September 5, 2002

¹⁷ Stockholm Forum, 27 January 2000, <http://www.mfa.gov.lv/en/ministry/publications/4266/4270/#Stocholm> (accessed February 18, 2014).

jailed by political competition, with attitudes towards the past becoming the most widespread political cleavage line in the entire region.¹⁸ The limited choices available for political entrepreneurs to carve identities in the first years of transition put the spotlight on “collective memory,” and the resulting interpretations of the socialist past, adapted to serve political competition, never reflected elite or societal consensus,¹⁹ instead buttressing the polarized nature of post-communist politics. Due to the Left’s ideological and often institutional association with a discredited past, these identity and memory politics were predominantly a prerogative of the post-communist Right. Its proponents drew symbolic legitimacy from a claim to higher moral authority, at times based upon past heroic deeds such as resistance to the communist regime, while promoting a public perception that the many leftist parties that emerged from the ruins of discredited communist parties are the rightful inheritors of a defunct, “criminal” regime.

In the last five years, this has ceased to be a mostly domestic story, and post-communist memory politics have gone European in a seeming convergence between the national and the regional. While it would be easy to see this simply as an initiative of a part of the continent that wants to strengthen its voice in Europe by obtaining wider recognition of its own “collective memory,” memory makers’ ambitious initiative is taking place before post-communist societies have proven their own ability to negotiate, resolve and close their national processes of coming to terms with the past. What we see in Central and Eastern Europe is a struggle to institutionalize, both domestically and in Europe, a version of the past that is generally inspired in theories of totalitarianism and places almost exclusive stress on the criminal features of the communist regime. This is done at the expense of the more comfortable memories of large swathes of the population that did not directly experience oppression and may have enjoyed the economic security and social predictability of life under communism, particularly in its later stages. In order to stress the alleged centrality of terror and oppression in

¹⁸ K. Benoit and M. Laver, “Estimating party policy positions: Comparing expert surveys and hand-coded content analysis,” *Electoral Studies* 26 (2007): 90–107; K. Williams, B. Fowler and A. Szczerbiak, “Explaining Lustration in Central Europe: A ‘Post-Communist Politics’ Approach,” *Democratization* 12, 1 (2005): 22–43; H. Kitschelt, Z. Mansfeldova, R. Markowski and G. Tóka, *Post-Communist Party Systems: Competition, Representation, and Inter-Party Cooperation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999).

¹⁹ See for instance M. Velikonja, “Lost in Transition: Nostalgia for Socialism in Post-socialist Countries,” *East European Politics and Societies* 23 (2009): 535–551.

communism, the comparison with Nazism has been consistently pursued by memory-makers through both formal and informal mechanisms, causing a subversion of the hitherto unquestioned standing of the Holocaust as the darkest chapter in European history.

This “usable totalitarianism”²⁰ and more broadly the crime-centered narrative it is intimately tied with was deployed by a coalition of memory-makers including politicians and intellectuals who have aligned interests and who are characterized by a “predominant tendency not to problematize” their own countries’ “role in the process of the communist takeover” or of war-time collaboration by right-wing authoritarian regimes, ultimately externalizing both fascism and communism.²¹ Memory-makers have thus unsurprisingly promoted a characterization of the socialist past as a historical aberration, while simultaneously reaching out to a more distant past in a paradoxical quest for historical continuity that will legitimate their position. They thus reach out to the entire mnemonic community of the nation, reframing history by stressing common suffering and rejecting the “alien” communist experience until a new national memory has been constructed.

The use of the terminology of totalitarianism is particularly obvious in the international endeavors of memory-makers, a phenomenon with roots in the various strains of dissidence that developed beginning in the 1970s, precisely as the theory began to be discredited in the West on the basis of its theoretical and methodological shortcomings. Even those dissidents who identified with the liberal Left deployed the term with a more activist than intellectual intent, adapting its definition to the various roles the concept could fulfill in domestic and international arenas. Domestically, describing the communist regimes as “totalitarian” helped draw a clear line between supporters and opponents of the regime and mobilize the population via binary oppositions such as “us” vs. “them,” “truth” vs. “lies” or “democracy” vs. “totalitarianism.” The common struggle against the dictatorship and the need to counter state propaganda glossed over divisions between its more liberal sectors who advocated a doctrine of human and civic rights, consensual politics and civic patriotism and the more conservative dissidents who privileged an ethnic

²⁰ M. Kopeček, “Von der Geschichtspolitik zur Erinnerung als politischer Sprache: Der tschechische Umgang mit der kommunistischen Vergangenheit nach 1989” in *Geschichtspolitik in Europa seit 1989. Deutschland, Frankreich und Polen im internationalen Vergleich*, ed. E. François et al. (Göttingen: Wallstein 2013), 356–395.

²¹ H. Karge, “Practices and Politics of Second World War Remembrance: (Trans-)National Perspectives from Eastern and South-Eastern Europe” in *A European Memory?*, ed. Pakier and Strath, 138.

understanding of the nation and used an alleged “national memory” as a narrative to lure broader sectors of society.²²

In international circles the term was equally useful at a time when Western politicians showed growing willingness to engage with Eastern European leaders based on the belief that communist regimes had embarked on the path of reform and could be treated as rational political and economic partners. Dissidents such as Adam Michnik feared that such coziness between communist leaders and particularly the Western Left came at the expense of support for independent social organizations. Supporters of these organizations claimed to be opposing a regime that had in some cases taken a conservative turn, rather than liberalize, pointing particularly to Poland after the imposition of martial law in 1981. Dissidents thus employed the term “totalitarianism” when meeting German interlocutors, well aware of its connotations with the Nazi regime, to convey a more negative assessment of state socialism. Similarly, the emergence of an unorthodox French Left that denounced the Soviet Union as totalitarian allowed dissidents to use the same terminology to transmit their concerns to the public of another key Western European country.²³

Many dissidents were aware of the poor fit between the reality of East European societies and totalitarian theory, and would simply argue for the term’s appropriateness in describing the ambitions of those in power as well as the totalitarian origins of state socialism. In the narrative of liberal dissidents, this “totalitarian spirit” and its ambition to control all aspects of everyday life had been countered by independent social groups and partly explains why intellectuals like Adam Michnik cautioned Western leaders against engaging with and, thus, implicitly supporting the “totalitarian” power structures.²⁴

Yet the intricacies of liberal dissident thought failed to mobilize the domestic opposition as effectively as the dichotomizing narratives of more conservative-leaning dissidents. While the former came to embrace something closer to the soul-searching repentance advocated by the EU’s “politics of regret,” the binary categories that characterized the latter’s under-

²² M. Kopeček, “Human Rights Facing a National Past: Dissident “Civic Patriotism” and the Return of History in East Central Europe, 1968–1989,” *Geschichte und Gesellschaft* 38 (2012), 595.

²³ R. Brier, “Adam Michnik’s Understanding of Totalitarianism and the West European Left: A Historical and Transnational Approach to Dissident Political Thought,” *East European Politics and Societies* 25, 2 (May 2011): 208, 211.

²⁴ Brier, “Adam Michnik’s Understanding of Totalitarianism and the West European Left,” 204.

standing of totalitarianism found greater continuity in the post-communist politics of the past. Through official pronouncements and state institutions citizens have been increasingly encouraged to perceive themselves as belonging to the clear and often mutually exclusive categories of “perpetrators,” “collaborators,” “victims,” or “dissidents.”

Thus, while former dissidents of diverse orientations decisively shaped debates over recent history, either to adopt staunch anti-communist positions or to criticize the excessive zeal of anti-communists, it was the conservative dissident historical approach and its particular understanding of totalitarianism that found more consistent political backing. It was this same group that during communism argued for historical memory to be cultivated to counter the ostensible historical amnesia and falsification promoted by communist rulers, and it is this same group that has fed contemporary memory-makers’ belief that the effects of such falsification remain pervasive and require counteraction.

Institutionalizing an Official Memory

As was argued before, the institutionalization of the usable totalitarian paradigm does not correspond to an acceptance of its crimes-centered narratives among the political class, the scholarly community, former dissidents or the public at large. Neither could it: its appeal and effectiveness has always been partial and its institutionalization relates to the considerable political support the political right granted to anti-communist discourse. In it, the Right identified a politically expedient ability to cuddle national feelings by pitting a small group of externally backed and “criminal” communist cadres against a helpless majority population, hence minimizing the nation’s responsibility for the inception and subsistence of communism while shifting guilt towards the political forces framed as representing continuity with the past.

Memory-makers’ ability to institutionalize a crimes-centered discourse relates to their capacity to align the interests of similarly engaged actors originating in the formally separated spheres of politics and academia. This strategy, increasingly pursued beyond borders, involves the services of a substantial community of historians committed to memory building and who see their priorities as converging with those of the state.²⁵ The

²⁵ For an overview of the evolution of the region’s historiography see: Antohi, “Narratives Unbound;” A. Laignel-Lavastine, “Fascism and Communism in Romania: The Comparative Stakes and Uses” in *Stalinism and Nazism*, ed. Rouso, 157–193.

revitalized mnemonic role of sections of the post-communist historiography occurs in a particularly delicate situation for universities and research institutions in the region. Their dependence on the state, frequent centralization and financial weakness makes local historiography more vulnerable than its counterpart in established democracies, while also increasing the state's temptation to engage those scholars more friendly to official, nation-building narratives.

The most widespread instance of this process involves influential portions of the political elite, committed to memory-making, providing similarly oriented historians with the appropriate financial and institutional resources in exchange for endowing politicians' crimes-centered narratives of the past with scholarly legitimacy. While these narratives have for over two decades played a central role in the region's competitive politics, it is only in recent years that we witness energetic efforts at institutionalizing an official collective memory through consistent research and public education activities, which more often than not are based on theoretical precepts drawn from totalitarian theory.

The institutional apparatus upholding the narratives of memory-makers and symbolizing the interest alignment between sectors of academia and politics is embodied by a novel and transnationally connected *lieu de memoire* here defined as *state-sponsored memory institutes*. First appearing in the mid-1990s, only in the last five decades have state-sponsored memory institutes become ubiquitous in the region, and while there are some differences in their size, funds, and in the number of practices they accumulate, their nature and objectives remain strikingly similar. Backed by state officialdom and claiming scholarly legitimacy from the pursuit of historical research, they constitute the most powerful and novel institution established in the region with the purpose of reflecting on the past. Often, they have departments also dealing with the Nazi era as a way to fundamentalize the comparison with communism and to preempt, or as a result of, domestic and foreign criticism. They are funded by the state—in some cases very generously—and governments have shown their ability to politicize their activities if deemed necessary. They are generally run by hybrid actors experienced both in politics and academia, actors who are able to negotiate the inherent tensions between these two formally separated fields, to conduct their activities transnationally, linking their institutes with sister organizations in the region by means of cooperation agreements and membership in common umbrella organizations. Their superior funding in countries with generally weak university and research structures, their frequent access to abundant archival material and their collec-

tion of victim testimonies allow them to make claim to constituting the most encompassing centers for grasping the past and to then instill its interpretation on the wider population.

These hybrid bodies concentrate an unusual number of memory practices, including: 1) producing and diffusing a crimes-centered discourse on the past, one that tends to be inspired on theories of totalitarianism but can also take the vocabulary of occupation and resistance, as tends to be the case in Poland and the Baltic countries; 2) organizing seminars and conferences for both academic and wider audiences; 3) awareness-raising activities, particularly aimed at younger generations; 4) scholarly research inspired on theories of totalitarianism and dominantly concerned with the early periods of communist history and the “criminal” activities of the state; 5) publishing of scholarly and non-scholarly books and journals, as well as magazines; 6) engagement in international co-operation, including cooperation agreements and intellectual exchanges and conferences in which best practices are shared; 7) organization of permanent or temporary exhibits; 8) educational outreach, which involves various activities aimed at affecting the educational system, such as drafting textbooks, giving “methodological” formation to school teachers or offering staff for university lectures; 9) collecting victim testimonies; 10) offering space for memorials or organizing visits to memorial sites; 11) setting up libraries; 12) media outreach to sensitize journalists on the activities and goals of the institute; 13) judicial activities such as assisting public prosecutors in investigating “communist crimes” or proposing legislation; 14) centralization of archival sources of the communist regime, for some institutes an ambition, for others a reality: Institutes promote the opening of communist-era secret service files and dismiss critics’ concerns about possible problems regarding their authenticity and/or possible misinterpretation; 15) lustration, that is the vetting of state officials; 16) digitalization of archival sources.

It is worth noting that an often-cited source of inspiration for post-communist state-sponsored memory institutes is the Federal Commissioner for the Stasi Archives (BStU), admired for its swift capacity to collect and organize enormous amounts of secret police files.²⁶ However,

²⁶ Žáček, Pavel; Former and First Director of the Czech Institute for the Study of Totalitarian Regimes (2008–2010), Interview with Zoltan Dujisin in Prague, Czech Republic, December 2012; Wilkemann, Neela; Director of the Platform of European Memory and Conscience, Interview with Zoltan Dujisin in Prague, Czech Republic, December 2012

a look at the practices and discourse of post-communist state-sponsored memory institutes highlights considerable differences with the German institute and signals far more comprehensive goals. Unlike its sister-institutes in Central and Eastern Europe, the BStU does not seek to act as a body of historical research beyond understanding the role and nature of the Stasi secret police, nor is it involved in broader identity-building projects,²⁷ although it has put its weight behind transnational initiatives that equalize communism and Nazism. In contrast, state-sponsored memory institutes are usually run by political appointees who have increasingly felt the need to stress the independence and apolitical nature of their enterprise, often explaining criticism as the result of attacks by former communists fearful of their revelations. Also, unlike the German trend-setter, state-sponsored memory institutes assess communist-era secret services as the principal symbol of the fundamentally “criminal” nature of state socialist regimes and, accordingly, promote an understanding of secret-service files as the most credible source for understanding the past. Their critics do not necessarily oppose the existence of the institutes as such, as many find the structures they put in place as potentially attractive to the sort of methodologically innovative and impartial historical research carried out in Germany, yet undoubtedly, the Central and Eastern European memory institutes have shown themselves to be more vulnerable to political pressure.

The foundation of the first state-sponsored memory institute was approved by the Lithuanian Senate in 1993. Its institutional predecessors were founded in 1992 and consist of a state research center and a state museum that were fused into a single institution, creating the Genocide and Resistance Research Centre of Lithuania. The creation of the Centre did not lead to its immediate emulation elsewhere and four years had to pass for a true example-setter in the region to emerge. The internationalization of this process with the set-up of the Polish Institute of National Remembrance (INR), the largest and most generously funded memory institute in the entire post-communist region, began in 1998.

The INR was established by the Polish parliament as a research institute of crimes committed under Nazism and Communism, defining itself by the nation-centered motto, “Our history creates our identity.” The INR

²⁷ M. Kopeček, “In Search of <<National Memory>>: The Politics of History, Nostalgia and the Historiography of Communism in the Czech Republic and East Central Europe” in *Past in the Making. Recent History Revisions and Historical Revisionism in Central Europe after 1989*, ed. M. Kopeček (Budapest–New York: CEU Press, 2008), 87–88.

was crucially granted prosecution powers and works under the legal concept of “communist crimes,” a term introduced in Polish law in 1998 and revised several times.²⁸ The state-sponsored institution has attracted controversy over its perceived political nature since the very onset,²⁹ although this claim became more obvious under the government of the conservative Law and Justice Party, which won the elections in 2005: the Party then took a clearly pro-active stance in deploying the institute’s resources for political purposes. In response to previous controversies over the selective release of secret service files, the institute had attempted to prevent access to its archives to persons suspected of harboring a political agenda, but soon after the elections its former directorate was replaced and all its central positions purged. Jarosław Kurtyka, a man who towed the government’s line, was selected as the new head of the office and the activities of the institute began receiving even more generous financing, turning it into one of the richest state institutions and one of the most respected ones among the rightist public and politicians.

We must wait until 2003 for the founding of another such organization, Slovakia’s Nation’s Memory Institute, which would become, together with the Polish Institute of National Remembrance that inspired it, an important example-setter for similarly oriented memory-makers in neighboring Czech Republic.³⁰ Similar to its Polish counterpart, Slovakia’s state-sponsored memory institute was created by right-wing ruling parties in 2003 with a commitment to “promote ideas of freedom and defense of democracy against such regimes as Nazism and Communism.” The Institute’s research orientation stresses the repressive activities of the regime and signals the former Czechoslovak secret services as the key to understanding the nature of the communist regime, defined as totalitarian. In spite of difficulties in obtaining all the files requested, the institute has released tens of thousands of names of collaborators and was given powers to cooperate with the prosecution of crimes committed under fascist and communist regimes. However, the institute is now relatively isolated from its sister organizations ever since the death of its first director Ján Langoš, replaced by Ivan Petránský in 2007. The new director, appointed

²⁸ The term currently defines “communist crimes” as crimes committed by the functionaries of the communist apparatus and is inspired by the similar concept of Nazi crimes, also present in Polish legislation.

²⁹ M. Górny, “From the Splendid Past into the Unknown Future: Historical Studies in Poland after 1989” in *Narratives Unbound*, ed. in Antohi, Trencsényi and Apor, 103.

³⁰ Žáček, interview with Z.Dujisin.

as part of a deal between the new ruling coalition, composed of the leftist Smer party and the nationalist Slovak National Party (SNS), instilled a new orientation on the institute, which began focusing less on condemning the communist past—the preferred orientation of the previous director and government—and more on Hungarian past atrocities and on sanitizing the Slovak pro-Nazi puppet regime.³¹

Both the Slovak and the Polish examples pointed to the potential for politicization of the activities of state-sponsored memory institutes, and yet, perhaps precisely for this reason, their set-up was an inspiration to similarly oriented memory-makers and their political allies on the Right throughout the region. In December 2005, the Institute for the Investigation of Communist Crimes in Romania was founded, and its stated aims are “to scientifically investigate and identify crimes, abuses and human rights infringements that took place during the entire communist period in Romania, and to petition the judiciary when crimes are revealed” and to publicly promote particular views of the past to a supposedly uninformed public. Its research adopts the totalitarian terminology and overwhelmingly stresses the role of state security services and other repressive apparatus in explaining the nature of the communist regime. In 2009 the Institute merged with the National Institute for the Memory of Romanian Exile, a public research institution created in 2003, which addresses topics related to the Romanian exile community under communism, to create the Institute for the Investigation of Communist Crimes and the Memory of the Romanian Exile. Between 2010 and 2012 its scientific council was headed by renowned U.S.-Romanian scholar Vladimir Tismaneanu.

The period between 2007 and 2009 sees a fundamental acceleration in the process of transnational co-operation between memory-makers in the region. This is facilitated by a string of electoral victories of the post-communist Right in the region and its active participation in EU affairs through the EU Council presidencies, which leads to growing networking activities among regional memory-makers, including in countries where such institutes still did not exist. What is currently the most active memory institute in pursuing an international condemnation of communism was created in 2007, the Czech Institute for the Study of Totalitarian Regimes. The Institute was created by a right wing, liberal-conservative majority parliament and officially charged with weighing the consequences of “the two totalitarian ideologies” that, at different times, dominated Czech lands: communism and Nazism. It quickly became an active part-

³¹ Wilkemann, interview with Z. Dujisin.

ner of the Czech liberal-conservative government during the country's EU presidency.³² The organization is staffed with historians who work with the totalitarian label and use its theories to filter and interpret their sources, while most dissenting historians who could not adapt to the dominant narrative or had issues with what they perceived as the politicized nature of the institute's activities have since left it.³³ The state-sponsored institution, funded by a special chapter of the state's budget, has been accused by its critics of using its research for influencing Czech politics and of targeting political opponents through the selective release of communist-era secret service files, while it was also criticized for not disclosing its operating budget in spite of multiple requests.³⁴

Slovenia's conservative government took heed of examples in the region and established the Study Centre for National Reconciliation in April 2008, months before facing an election it would lose to the Social Democrats, justifying its set up with "an objective need for increased state activity" in establishing historical facts about 20th century history. The same year sees the establishment of the similarly oriented Estonian Institute of Historical Memory, although this organization shows important continuities with the international commissions created in all three Baltic countries in 1998 and tasked with investigating both the Nazi and Communist periods. These continuities are noticeable in the Institute's staff and in its focus on historical research at the expense of the public education and awareness raising activities privileged by its East Central European counterparts, also a result of the more consensual nature of memory politics in Estonia.

This left Latvia, Bulgaria and Hungary as the only post-communist EU member states without a state-sponsored memory institute, although in the case of Latvia it is worth mentioning that a state commission researching the Communist and Nazi eras shut down its activities due to budget cuts related to the country's severe economic recession. Nevertheless, there is more to this transnationally-linked family of institutes, with several other museums, foundations and memorials that, while not fully fledged historical research institutions officially charged with establishing a historical

³² Žáček, interview with Z.Dujisin.

³³ M. Kopeček and M. Spurný, "The History and Memory of Communism in the Czech Republic," Heinrich Boell Stiftung, 2010, <http://www.boell.cz/web/52-873.html> (accessed February 18, 2014).

³⁴ B. I. Konviser, "Writing the history books," *Global Post*, August 16, 2009 <http://www.globalpost.com/dispatch/czech-republic/090805/the-institute-the-study-totalitarian-regimes> (accessed February 18, 2014)

truth, perform very similar practices. The most prominent of these institutes are memory-building museums, particularly the Museum of the Occupation of Latvia (1993), the House of Terror Museum in Hungary (2002), and the Warsaw Uprising Museum in Poland (2004). Similarly to state-sponsored memory institutes, these museums engage in producing a crimes-centered discourse, awareness raising activities, historical research, publishing, collecting victim testimonies, organizing conferences and seminars, educational outreach and the pursuit of international cooperation with state-sponsored memory institutes across national borders.

Converging the Politics of “Truth”

The striking institutional similarities among institutes carrying out very similar practices are not coincidental: a process of institutional replication began in the 1990s following and subsequently adapting the German (BStU) model, but the considerable acceleration of this institutional diffusion in the region in the mid to late 2000s derives from a concerted effort on the part of memory-makers who have shared a sense of dissatisfaction with what they perceive as the incomplete nature of the transitions in the post-communist region. This dissatisfaction variously relates to the continued presence of former members of communist parties in the region's political, economic and judicial life. For memory-makers this assumes an unacceptable scale to the supposed long-term damage caused by communism on the mentalities, habits and values of the citizenry, and to an alleged threat posed by a lack of commitment to democratic values which, in the view of memory-makers, is intimately tied to an insufficient rejection of the totalitarian ethos. The realization among memory-makers that they share the same concerns and goals, coupled with the dynamics of European integration, has led to an increasing alignment of interests across borders, to the point that memory-makers actively work to replicate best practices across the region. This institutional convergence obviously has consequences that are more than technical, implying a convergence of memory regimes along all three dimensions that define it: *mnemonic substance*, *modes of remembrance* and *memory practices*. This convergence crucially facilitates the goal of presenting a common front when pursuing a “politics of truth” in European arenas and helps legitimate the claim to speak in the name of the region, which can also ultimately assist in strengthening the domestic legitimacy of these narratives.

In terms of *mnemonic substance*, there is often an attempt at streamlining a common discourse of the past that is simple enough to enjoy acceptance across post-communist countries, whereas in other cases we observe a mismatch in the terminology and interpretations upheld by memory-makers depending on whether they address an international or a domestic audience. The transnational discourse tends to excuse the local population or minimize its responsibility for the inception and length of communist rule by assigning blame to external others and a few internal aliens, while pitting communism as an evil comparable to Nazism. The latter is achieved by implicitly minimizing the ostensible uniqueness of the Holocaust and maximizing the significance of victims' numbers, stressing that what matters is not the ideology in whose name crimes are committed, but the outcome of the crimes themselves.³⁵ The unifying theory of the transnational narrative is totalitarianism, employed to different degrees, more subtly and hesitantly appearing on the narratives of the Polish Institute of National Remembrance, ubiquitous in the case of the Institute for the Investigation of Communist Crimes and the Memory of the Romanian Exile or of the Czech Institute for the Study of Totalitarian Regimes, which claims it "contributes to social discourse concerning totalitarian regimes." The texts produced by the Czech state body invariably add the adjective "totalitarian" after each use of the "communist" adjective (i.e. "communist totalitarian power," "communist totalitarian regime," "communist totalitarian ideology," etc.). The adoption of the term is not strictly correlated to the severity of the previous regime: the Study Centre for National Reconciliation, the better-funded memory institute in the former Yugoslavia, claims one of its goals is examining the country's experience with "three totalitarian systems: fascism, communism and Nazism." On the other hand, the Baltic countries, which witnessed the brutal experience of mass deportations, place more stress on the terminology of occupation in their domestic dealings, but place great stress on the language of totalitarianism in those international platforms where they align interests with sister organizations.

Also implicitly in line with totalitarian theories, there is a dominant tendency to pit local populations (or "the nation") against a small group of communists who employ the secret police to control citizens through terror and intimidation, hence reducing or externalizing national guilt. The few who resist communist rule are depicted as heroes who risked their lives for democracy, freedom or the national good. For instance, the

³⁵ Wilkemann, interview with Z. Dujisin.

Genocide and Resistance Research Centre of Lithuania cites among its objectives "to investigate the physical and spiritual genocide of Lithuanians" and to "immortalize the memory of the freedom fighters and the genocide victims." The latter center organizes a summer camp named "Postwar History for Young People," whose objectives are "to instruct young people about the resistance, its ideology, structure, and forms as well as about the postwar years," "to show the resistance participants' love for their homeland, and their understanding of justice, the free world and democracy" and to "to instill civic duties and patriotism in young people." We find a similar tone in the Institute of National Remembrance, which states its commitment to research "Polish citizens' efforts to fight for an independent Polish State, in defense of freedom and human dignity" or "patriotic traditions of resistance against occupation," while also containing an investigative department called the "Chief Commission for the Prosecution of Crimes against the Polish Nation." Little or no emphasis is placed on temporal or spatial differences between communist regimes, thus advancing the theory of communism's indivisibility, and the equalization of communist and Nazi rule is a frequent conclusion of the assessments of the past promoted by the institutes.

Nonetheless, the narratives officially upheld by memory institutes, while clearly conditioning their overall orientation, are not automatically reproduced by their research and public education activities, which is indicative of the fact that they should not be treated as monolithic organizations. Official documents of the Genocide and Resistance Research Centre of Lithuania exhibit the tendencies for externalization previously described, but the Centre has also produced some scholarly work that addresses the extensive role Lithuanians played in assisting Nazi forces in the extermination of the local Jewish population. Some of the investigations by the Polish Institute of National Remembrance have also addressed sensitive historical topics that demonstrate local collaboration in the Holocaust, as shown by the three-year inquiry into the Jedwabne massacre (2000–2003).

As regards the *modes of remembrance*, a simultaneous injunction to remember is cast on the various populations of post-communist countries, with the agents of such injunction speaking from a position of officialdom. This position is reinforced by the activities of state-sponsored memory institutes, which, claiming to provide a historical "truth" on behalf of the state, accumulate much of the memory work in their countries. Scholarly research on behalf of these institutes is particularly geared towards substantiating such an official and centralized national memory. Many of

the papers are an enumeration of “communist crimes” rather than a historical, economic, or sociological survey of the period. By way of illustration, the Genocide and Resistance Research Centre of Lithuania cites as one of its main objectives “to establish historical truth and justice” and “to investigate the physical and spiritual genocide of Lithuanians.” Similarly, the International Commission for the Evaluation of the Crimes of the Nazi and Soviet Occupation Regimes in Lithuania is committed to influencing the “formulation of the objective official position” on “historical questions.” The set-up of Slovenia’s Study Centre for National Reconciliation in April 2008 was justified with “an objective need for increase of state activity” to work towards the goal of objectively examining “historical facts.” Among the main objectives of the Institute for the Investigation of Communist Crimes and the Memory of the Romanian Exile we find the need “to administer and analyze, in a rigorous and scientific manner, the memory of the communist regime in Romania.”

Finally, and in a development that has considerably accelerated within the last five years, these same institutes are increasingly active in transferring and harmonizing *memory practices* across the region. This is done through the signing of bilateral agreements, the organization of various conferences in which best practices are shared and the set-up of platforms and informal groups that facilitate the transfer of knowledge on these practices. Sometimes this process involves contacts with potential partners in countries where state-sponsored memory-institutes are lacking a view to help them replicate local or regional examples.³⁶ The transfer of knowledge on practices is ultimately useful in that it enhances memory-makers’ ability to fight mnemonic battles domestically and internationally by providing them with a palette of previously tested practices that may help institutionalize their narratives.

The urge to establish a historical “truth” is palpable in many of the memory practices being shared among state-sponsored memory institutes. Namely, their mission statements typically include a commitment to educate the public, and particularly younger generations, regarding the crimes committed under communist regimes. This can be done through lectures, expositions, and reforms of the education sector or awareness raising campaigns. The latter take a variety of shapes, consisting of everything from campaigns, petitions, media interventions, public speeches and talks. The overwhelming perception from the actors developing these activities is that the public is gravely, and in some cases deeply ignorant of the

³⁶ Žáček, interview with Z.Dujisin.

“true” nature of communism, often falling into a dangerous nostalgia that is considered a threat to democratic values and to the avoidance of future resurrections of totalitarian forms of government. For instance, the Czech Institute for the Study of Totalitarian Regimes says in its website “one of its key missions” is to “remedy the public’s, and especially schoolchildren’s, acute ignorance of their recent turbulent history.” A parallel assessment is made by the Estonian Institute of Historical Memory, whose “mission also fulfills an obligation to the citizens of Estonia, so that they may better understand what they themselves or their parents and grandparents endured under Soviet rule.” The strong emphasis placed on affecting educational systems is thus unsurprising. This is done through the production of textbooks, classroom talks or “methodological” formation for school history teachers. While the past is often contested among older generations, the goal appears to be to bring up the younger generation in unanimity. The Institute for the Investigation of Communist Crimes and the Memory of the Romanian Exile wishes “to support the setting-up of educational tools destined to analyse the memory of the communist period,” whereas the Czech Institute for the Study of Totalitarian Regimes engages in professional co-operation with schools to “enrich the supply of educational materials and teaching aids to facilitate the teaching of modern history, and to help teachers orient themselves in issues of contemporary history and its presentation to pupils and students.” Members of its staff also lecture in a number of Czech universities.

This convergence of domestic memory regimes is not only relevant to the post-communist region, as the same institutional apparatus that is crystallizing post-communist memory regimes is also the means through which post-communist memory-makers are ambitioning to reform the EU’s official regime of remembrance. State-sponsored memory institutes are being deployed by their political supporters for Europeanizing a vision of the past that upholds communism and Nazism as equal evils, a support which is explained by the ability of memory institutes to endow the narratives of the post-communist Right with scholarly legitimacy. Moreover, their unusual concentration of memory practices allows them to monopolize much of the memory work in their countries and to present themselves on European platforms as the carriers of a neglected Eastern European voice demanding to be heard in the continent. As memory institutes have intensified cooperation and gained a regional dimension, their European visibility has grown to the point where they are offering a comprehensive alternative to the EU’s memory regime.

The Europolitics of Truth

Officially, the goal of post-communist *memory-makers*, that is the politicians and intellectuals who are active and organized in their endeavor to instill particular views of the socialist past, is to convince Brussels to accommodate in its historical narrative the supposedly all-European but neglected experience of communism, one that should stand alongside Nazism as the darkest chapter in European history. Memory-makers consistently espouse the argument that Europe has suffered from two comparable forms of totalitarianism, but while it has accounted for the consequences of Nazism, it is turning a blind eye to the still palpable effects of communism.

This discourse is the product of decades of dialogue between memory-makers from the scholarly/intellectual and political fields in post-communist Europe and as it continues to institutionalize domestically and regionally, it increasingly clashes with the mnemonic substance of the European Union, centered on the uniqueness of the Holocaust. Indeed, memory-makers are advocating the equalization of Nazi and communist crimes with the ultimate aim of unconditionally condemning the latter and of diffusing a crimes-centered narrative of the communist past, one inspired on a usable theory of totalitarianism.

Nevertheless, this mnemonic dispute should not be dismissed as amounting to a “clash of memories” that could be resolved by negotiating a more consensual mnemonic substance between the two halves of Europe. Firstly, this would assume that the mnemonic substance that has been institutionalized in post-communist Europe is consensual which, as was argued above, would be a grave misconception in view of its politically competitive role. The institutes which have been charged with assessing the past have been accused of serving political competition in a variety of forms, namely by making public appearances consistently accompanied by members of selected political parties, by selectively releasing secret service files that discredit political opponents and, crucially, by upholding a discourse of the past that is aligned with that of the political forces backing them. These elements support the view that post-communist makers are proceeding to transnationalize a memory of communism before any sense of normalization of the past has taken root in the region, with the possible exception of the Baltic countries where the parties representing the dominant nationalities (i.e. those parties not representing the Russian community) broadly converge on their memory politics.

Secondly, it would be misguided to assume that the incompatibilities between post-communist memory-makers and the EU are a mere matter of substance, since a close look at the actions and discourse of the actors involved in the “challenge from the East” indicates additional divergences with regards to the modes of remembrance promoted by the European Union. Western European countries, albeit at times hesitantly, are increasingly on the path of desacralization and democratization,³⁷ opening their national narratives of collective memory to previously unheard or neglected voices, in what can be described as a pluralization of collective memory. By contrast, post-communist memory-makers have gone to great lengths to create institutions which centrally administer a “national memory” and, while indeed integrating the previously neglected voices of the victims of communist repression, these same voices have become increasingly hegemonic and unchallenged in their interpretation of the past. Finally, the lack of domestic consensus among historians, the public or politicians, when it comes to pitting Nazism and Communism as equal evils, would hardly provide an accurate description of the relation between Western European politics and the view of Nazism as an absolute evil in line with the interpretation officially upheld by the EU.

Thus the EU’s pre-accession hope that its culture of remembrance would exert a demonstration effect on Central and Eastern European political cultures has seen an unexpected twist of events, in which it is the new members of the European Union who challenge Brussels’ memory regime by deploying highly centralized memory institutes claiming an ability to establish a historical truth and questioning the privileged standing of Nazism as the worst chapter in European history. This clash thus amounts to more than different historical experiences and lack of mutual understanding: the situation at hand is better described by a clash between regimes of remembrance—one promoted by Brussels on the basis of a developing Western European consensus and which is based on a “politics of regret,” the other one pushed forth by a transnational alliance of post-communist memory-makers and based on a “politics of truth.”

This political-scholarly alliance has crystallized into two groups that work closely together: the *de facto* political arm of this alliance is an informal group of forty members of the European Parliament, overwhelmingly members of the European People’s Party, who work under the name of “Reconciliation of European Histories.” Their scholarly allies are represented by the “Platform of European Memory and Conscience,” a Europe-

³⁷ Müller, *Memory & Power in Post-war Europe*, 9.

level umbrella organization for coordinating and expanding the activities of memory institutes that act as the political “think-tanks.”³⁸ The two are in constant communication, sharing ideas for policies and memory practices and negotiating a common discourse. While initially the political arm of the movement was most active, recent developments show state-sponsored memory institutes as the core apparatus of mnemonic convergence. Following EU resistance to the perceived politicization of memory by the post-communist Right, a new consensual strategy seems to be emerging, one presenting state-sponsored memory institutes as representative voices of the region. This strategy involves apparently more autonomous initiatives on the part of the Platform, which nevertheless continues to use the political support of sympathetic post-communist governments and MEPs to strengthen the domestic and international presence of its members.

Memory-makers’ call to reunite Eastern and Western memories are not new, yet substantial action aimed at affecting Europe’s regime of remembrance on the basis of a “politics of truth” was made possible only once a favorable political and institutional constellation was in place. Firstly, the absence of socialist or social-democratic parties in most government coalitions across Central and Eastern Europe in the last half decade provided memory-makers with the political opportunity structure to further institutionalize their narratives by imitating available examples in the region. State-sponsored memory institutes were created in many of the countries from which they were missing, and together with their previously existing sister organizations they have been allowed to use regional political structures such as the Visegrad Group or the European Union to deepen international co-operation. Which takes us to a second, crucial political opportunity structure, involving the EU Council presidencies of Slovenia (2008), Czech Republic (2009), Hungary and Poland (2011), all of them coordinated by right-wing governments, which due to their proximity, were successfully used by memory-makers to maintain the momentum of “politics of truth” in the European agenda and create a semblance of unanimity in continental platforms.

It took little more than five years of EU membership for the transnational interest alignment between politicians and scholars to find various institutional expressions at the European level. Paradoxically, the same European political structures that institutionalized “politics of regret” have graced memory-makers with the political opportunity structure within which to pursue their “politics of truth.”

³⁸ Wilkemann, interview with Z. Dujisin.

Foreign ministers of post-communist countries first attempted to use this political opportunity structure in April 2007 when a European law against Holocaust denial was approved, leaving to member states the choice to enforce it or not. Representatives of Baltic countries proposed a similar provision against the denial of Stalinist crimes and there were parallel calls from other post-communist countries to punish the denial of “communist crimes.” While the proposal was rejected, EU justice commissioner Franco Frattini committed to organizing EU-level public hearings on Stalin-era crimes, introducing the topic into the EU agenda³⁹.

In 2008 post-communist memory-makers began aligning their interests across borders and, through a collaborative effort, produced the Prague Declaration on European Conscience and Communism, which to this day remains the fundamental set of principles and objectives for memory-makers.⁴⁰ The document suggests a set of measures that, if applied, would imply a fundamental shift in the dominant regime of remembrance in Western Europe, and was signed by high-profile European politicians. Among them we find former Czechoslovak President Václav Havel, former Lithuanian President Vytautas Landsbergis, Vice-President of the Liberal International Asparoukh Panov, Former Minister for Education, Youth and Sport and Vice-president of the Slovenian Democratic Party Milan Zver, Former Romanian Minister of Justice Valeriu Stoica, members of the European Parliament from Lithuania, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Germany, Latvia, Slovakia, Poland, Romania, Slovenia, Sweden, Finland, United Kingdom and the Netherlands as well as other prominent dissidents and historians. It was meant to summarize the findings of an international Conference which took place in Prague by the same name, one organized by a Czech Senate Committee, the Czech deputy Prime Minister for European Affairs Alexandr Vondra, the Office of the Government of the Czech Republic, the Czech Institute for the Study of Totalitarian Regimes and the European People’s Party’s Robert Schuman Foundation, among others. The conference also received a letter of support from notable political figures such as Margaret Thatcher, Nicolas Sarkozy, Canadian Secretary of State Jason Kennedy, and Zbigniew Brzezinski, one of the main theorists of totalitarianism who also happens to be a former U.S. National Security Advisor. The final declaration was signed over the following years and months by various members of con-

³⁹ A. Rees, “Managing the History of the Past in the Former Communist States” in *A European Memory?*, ed. Pakier and Strath, 231.

⁴⁰ Wilkemann, interview with Z. Dujisin.

servative and right-liberal parties and other European MPs, mainly from East-Central Europe, by representatives of state-sponsored memory institutes, museums and historical commissions, and even by such unexpected supporters as the government-in-exile of Belarus and the representative of the Dalai-Lama.

The text⁴¹ is a faithful reflection of totalitarian theories and concepts, founded on the comparison between communism and Nazism and with concrete steps aimed at an overhaul of Europe's memory regime. It seeks the recognition of communist and Nazi ideologies as inseparable from the extermination and deportation of "whole nations and groups of population," describes communist regimes as "an integral and horrific part of Europe's common history" and point to "pan-European responsibility for crimes committed by communism," advocating an assessment of "communist crimes" following the Nuremberg Tribunal formulation. The declaration firstly calls for an international day of remembrance for the victims of Nazism and communism to be established, but also recommends national governments and European bodies to take concrete steps such as: a) having parliaments "acknowledge Communist crimes as crimes against humanity, leading to the appropriate legislation, and to the parliamentary monitoring of such legislation," b) the set-up of committees tasked with collecting information on "violations of human rights under totalitarian Communist regimes at national level with a view to collaborating closely with a Council of Europe committee of experts"; c) the "establishment of an Institute of European Memory and Conscience"; d) organizing an international conference on the crimes of these regimes "with the results to be largely publicized world-wide"; and e) "adjustment and overhaul of European history textbooks so that children could learn and be warned about communism and its crimes in the same way as they have been taught to assess the Nazi crimes." These proposals are justified by an alleged Western European ignorance of the horrors of communism, with memory-makers openly suggesting the East's acknowledgement and awareness of Nazi crimes is not being reciprocated by a Western effort to recognize the horrors of communism.

The call to establish a day of remembrance for the victims of communist and Nazi regimes was partly heeded by both the European Union and the OSCE in 2008, which approved it with a large majority after replacing the terms "Totalitarian" and "Communist" with the less controversial "Stalinist." The act was a concession to post-communist memory-makers

⁴¹ <http://www.praguedeclaration.eu/> (accessed February 18, 2014).

but also included an implicit rejection of the totalitarian narrative by signaling Stalinism as an exceptional form of communism. A similar message could be read from the OSCE's adoption of the Vilnius Declaration, condemning Nazism and Stalinism as Europe's two major totalitarian regimes, after some of its proponents attempted a clear condemnation of all forms of communism as totalitarianism. Ever since, memory-makers have insistently pushed for the totalitarian formulation that stresses the indivisibility of communism.⁴²

In September 2008 the European Parliament staged a public hearing explicitly inspired by the Prague Declaration and organized by the Greens-European Free Alliance with the title "Totalitarian Regimes and the opening of the secret files archives in Central and Eastern Europe." In the official program the organizing MPs named the Prague Declaration as "the common basis for the research on and evaluation of communist regimes" while arguing that "objective comprehensive information about the communist totalitarian past leading to a deeper understanding and discussion is a necessary condition for future integration of all European nations." The hearing resulted in the establishment of the "Reconciliation of European Histories" working group with the declared intention to reconcile "different historical narratives in Europe" and "consolidate them into a united European memory of the past" that will include "the experience of the post-communist nations." The informal group of MEPs, which has organized various public hearings and meetings on totalitarianism, also externalizes the communist experience by calling on Europeans to understand that the "Iron Curtain not only excluded the captive nations from our common European home, but it also excluded 50 years of our true history from European history."

EU presidencies from former communist countries actively promoted memory-makers' "politics of truth." The 2008 Slovenian presidency of the EU organized a hearing and compiled a report titled "Crimes Committed by Totalitarian Regimes," aimed at improving knowledge and public awareness of totalitarian crimes. During March 2009 the Czech presidency of the EU, backed by MEPs from the "Reconciliation of European Histories" group and in the presence of the vice-president of the EP, Alejo Vidal-Quadras Roca, hosted another public hearing on "European Conscience and Crimes of Totalitarian Communism: 20 Years After," with the stated goal of establishing a European platform of memory and conscience

⁴² Valic Zver, Andreja; Director of the Study Centre for National Reconciliation, Interview with Zoltan Dujisin in Ljubljana, Slovenia, November 2012.

and of providing support to the various state-sponsored memory institutes in the region. A year later, on February 25, 2010, another international conference on “Crimes of the Communist Regimes” took place, organized by the Institute for the Study of Totalitarian Regimes and the Czech government in cooperation with the European Parliament, the European Commission and the Konrad Adenauer Foundation, among others. The conference ended in calls to bring justice to “perpetrators of communist crimes” and called for the “creation of a new international court with a seat within the EU for the crimes of communism.” In March 2011 the European Parliament was once again chosen to host a hearing organized by the European People’s Party and the Hungarian presidency of the EU on “What do Young Europeans know about Totalitarianism?” whereas on August 2011 the Polish presidency organized a conference to celebrate the Day of Remembrance for the Victims of Totalitarian Regimes.

This favorable constellation of political factors culminated in the establishment of the Platform of European Memory and Conscience in October 2011, following an agreement between the four East-Central European countries that form the Visegrad Group (Czech Republic, Slovakia, Hungary and Poland). At the time all four countries were, for the first time since the transition, ruled by conservative or right-liberal parties, allowing them to culminate the work done since the drafting of the Prague declaration. The action was part of an initiative of the Polish presidency of the EU, which enjoyed the support of the European Parliament and the EU Council as well as of Czech and Polish memory institutes and other institutions concerned with researching, documenting and raising awareness on the “Communist totalitarian” past. Funded by the International Visegrad Fund, which in its turn receives its funding from Visegrad states, and coordinated by the Prague-based Institute for the Study of Totalitarian Regimes, the platform set as its main aim to further support the activities of memory institutes as part of its stated educational objectives. Platform members use it mostly as a source of logistical support in organizing the various workshops, meetings and conferences that facilitate the transfer and harmonization of practices across countries.

Reacting to Mixed Signals from Brussels

The reaction to this “challenge from the East” on the part of Brussels has been ambiguous and hesitant. The EU’s dilemma has been apparent in some of the statements from its officials when commenting on the activi-

ties of post-communist memory-makers. In response to a 2008 hearing on crimes committed by totalitarian regimes, organized under the Slovenian EU presidency, Jacques Barrot, a French center-right politician who at the time held the position of Vice-President of the European Commission responsible for Justice, Freedom and Security, tried to reconcile the need to acknowledge the voices of memory-makers, without compromising the modes of remembrance that define the EU's memory regime:

Member States in Western Europe should be more sensitive to the tragic past of the Member States in eastern Europe. Taking this into account, the Commission is examining how existing Community programmes, notably in the field of education and citizenship can be further used to raise awareness of these issues across Europe. Finally, the Commission underlines that the Union has very few powers in this area. All countries must find their own way of coming to terms with their past, of meeting the expectations of victims and their descendants, and of achieving reconciliation. The role of the EU can only be to facilitate this process by encouraging discussion, fostering the sharing of experience and best practices, and bringing the various players together.⁴³

On the one hand, and at the risk of appearing to disregard Eastern Europe's historical experience and political voice, the EU cannot reject the historical representation put forward by Central and Eastern Europe, where legislative and other state bodies have, in the first years of transition as well as in more recent years, endorsed official interpretations of the past.⁴⁴ On the other hand, the European Commission is aware of the partisan nature of memory-makers' representations of the past, as well as of the contradiction between post-communist "politics of truth" and the evolving EU's culture of remembrance focused on the uniqueness of the Holocaust.

Funding patterns confirm this picture: memory-makers' state-sponsored research institutes do not receive any direct funding from Brussels, whose grants are made available to them only for specific projects under initiatives such as the Active European Remembrance Fund, a part of the EU's Europe for Citizens Program promoting commemorative projects. While the program's guidelines stress the centrality of Nazism and Stalinism to European memory, the EU is confirming its reluctance to

⁴³ <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/sides/getAllAnswers.do?reference=P-2008-6646&language=ES> (accessed February 18, 2014).

⁴⁴ C. Kiss, "Transitional Justice: The (Re)Construction of Post-Communist Memory" in *The Burden of Remembering: Recollections and Representations of the 20th Century*, ed. E. Koresaar, E. Lauk and K. Kuutma (Helsinki: SKS Kirjat, 2009), 129; A.H. Beattie, "The Past in the Politics of Divided and Unified Germany" in *Partisan Histories*, ed. Friedman and Kenney, 26.

abandon the core of its mnemonic substance through an overwhelming preference for Holocaust-related projects at the expense of initiatives geared towards a clear-cut condemnation of communism⁴⁵.

With memory-makers aware of such reluctance, their strategies currently involve putting more indirect pressure on the commission by demanding support for the main institutional apparatus of mnemonic convergence, state-sponsored memory institutes. This support is deemed vital by memory-makers in view of the vulnerability of such institutes to political contingency. While it is unlikely they would be scrapped, since this could controversially signal an attempt to cover up past crimes by which-ever political force opposes its activities, they are still susceptible to more subtle changes that may question their original mission, in view of their vulnerability to political whims.

This was the rationale behind the exhortations of MEPs from the “Reconciliation of European Histories” Group in parliamentary debates, calling for EU funding and support for state-sponsored memory institutes⁴⁶, a tactic that has meanwhile been abandoned in view of the difficulties involved in securing funding for institutes legally defined as state organizations. Currently state-sponsored memory institutes are trying to shield themselves from domestic political contingency by obtaining European legitimacy, and the set-up of the Platform of European Memory and Conscience in 2011 with the approval of the European Parliament and the EU Council was part of this strategy. Moreover, memory institutes seek EU funding for remembrance and educational projects with other European partners⁴⁷, which may create legally binding agreements that would deter attempts to scrap them or substantially alter the nature of their activities. The Platform also works to obtain additional funding for its activities, recently focusing more on private foundations than on governments due to the current financial difficulties faced by Europe. Another strategy which may legitimate a handful of these institutes is an application on behalf of the platform to obtain status of European Heritage, granted by the European Commission to “heritage sites that celebrate and symbolize European integration, ideals and history” to archives of communist-era files.⁴⁸

⁴⁵ Žáček, interview with Z.Dujisin; Wilkemann, interview with Z.Dujisin; Valic Zver, Interview with Z. Dujisin

⁴⁶ European Parliament, Debate on European Conscience and Totalitarianism, Strasbourg, March 25, 2009.

⁴⁷ Žáček, interview with Z.Dujisin.

⁴⁸ Wilkemann, interview with Z.Dujisin.

Finally, state-sponsored memory institutes have also shown an ability to learn and evolve, partly through their own experience and partly due to the influx of new staff, although their main weakness still lies in their structurally-determined potential for politicization. Memory institutes are reacting to the criticisms of previous years over excessive politicization by attempting to stay out of political struggles, with many of them now appointing less political and more scholarly figures to head the institutes. Moreover, the institutes have responded to accusations of neglecting the Nazi past at the expense of the politically expedient study of Communist repression by dedicating additional attention to the Holocaust or the interwar era. Whether this will have an effect on the international pursuit of a condemnation of Nazi and communist "totalitarianism," and whether as a result of external criticism and staff changes the latter notion moves closer to that upheld by the liberal dissidents of the 1970s and 1980s, remains to be seen.

Conclusion

The Europeanization of a crimes-centered regime of remembrance ultimately results from the actions of specific governments who, by aligning their interests with sectors of the scholarly community and with similarly oriented political elites across borders, have created a novel institutional apparatus that can push their agenda in Europe. Paradoxically, the same structures through which Europe's hitherto prevailing memory regime had evolved are being used by this coalition of memory-makers to have their voices heard in Europe. This constitutes a partial reversal in the flow of mnemonic substance between west and east, one that is unlikely to proceed smoothly.

The EU is still lacking a clear strategy as to how to absorb and accommodate the narratives coming from post-communist officialdom. These narratives are put forward as bringing reconciliation between east and west, pluralizing and completing Europe's master mnemonic narrative and aiding the process of European integration, but the EU perceives them as minimizing the significance of the Holocaust, overly politicized and emerging from excessively centralized structures. The EU cannot fully reject such narratives without risking accusations of insensitivity and hegemony, but seems reluctant to abandon the principles of European remembrance that have been built over decades.

As memory-makers continue to lobby Brussels to accommodate their narrative and take a clear stance on the issue of "communist totalitarian-

ism,” one may ask for how long will the EU be able to sustain its ambiguous position. Moreover, memory-makers are showing an ability to rapidly adapt their strategies to prevailing conditions, and shifting tactics whenever deemed necessary, implying that we might witness new forms of organization and co-operation in the future with a view on enhancing their legitimacy and forcing Brussels to adapt. Nonetheless, the crucial mnemonic apparatus of memory-makers, the state-sponsored memory institutes, remain vulnerable to domestic political contingency, which adds a sense of urgency to memory-makers attempts’ to legitimize them in European platforms.

Brussels might just prefer to wait, in the meanwhile, and the European Left will not oppose, as a European-level legitimation of the totalitarian interpretation of the communist past could provide the Right with a permanent symbolic advantage. This is more likely a fear of the Left in post-communist Europe, where for over two decades all polities without exception have witnessed how a crimes-centered memory of communism provided the Right with a competitive political advantage. While it would be simplistic to dismiss the motivations of memory-makers as purely political, what is important to retain is that such large-scale overhauls in a polity’s culture of remembrance will have abundant unexpected consequences, many of which are bound to remain outside the control of any particular actor, institution or state.

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It is impossible, after reading this volume, to still give any credit to those who claimed that 1989 was a revolution without ideas, or could not be a revolution because it offered no ideas. We should be grateful that a new generation of scholars—most of whom not burdened by the assumptions and affinities that have inhibited participants and contemporary observers—can look with a cool eye both at the thinking that accompanied radical change and at the sometimes bizarre amalgams that have furnished political language in the last quarter-century in East Central Europe.

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The major contribution of this volume—beyond the well-trodden and largely exhausted path of "transitology"—is that it offers a rather different approach to the understanding of the Great Transformation of the last quarter of a century: the remapping of the political landscape of East Central Europe through an intellectual history of the post-1989 era.

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